

G A R D E N
M E D I T A T I O N S.

BY EDWARD BURY,

MINISTER OF GREAT BOLAS IN SHROPSHIRE, A.D. 1677. .

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P R E F A C E.

THE following Meditations are taken from “The Husbandman’s Companion : containing One Hundred Occasional Meditations, Reflections, and Ejaculations, especially suited to men of that employment ; directing them how they may be heavenly minded while about their ordinary calling. By Edward Bury, Late Minister of Great Bolas in Shropshire, 1677.”

In this Work the Meditations particularly adapted for the Garden are selected, and the title conformed to this alteration. Some quaint words have been exchanged for others expressing the same meaning ; and some texts of Scripture have been added at the end of each Meditation.

The following extracts from the author’s Epistle Dedicatory will show his design : “I conceive it is real communion with Christ, and the life of faith, that makes the soul fat and flourishing ; and I think that meditation conduces as much to this as any duty whatsoever. Prayer, I know, brings in supplies from Heaven, and so does this ; and these two usually are concomitant, and where the one is neglected the other is seldom well performed. Meditation, like the bee, fetches honey both from flowers and weeds ; yea, this Divine alchymist extracts gold out of the coarsest metals.

“ There is no man so busy, if not sinfully employed, but may find some time every day to converse with God, and now and then make a journey to heaven, and view those celestial mansions prepared for those who love God. There is none so dull witted, if honest hearted, but may learn some profitable lessons in nature’s school. The least worm or gnat, or leaf of a tree, will point out God to an observant Christian.

“ That Meditation is a Christian duty, none that pretend to religion, or to reason itself, will deny ; and that to meditate upon God’s works as well as his word, is our duty is evident. God sometimes sends us to the ox and ass, Isa. i. 3 ; sometimes to the fowls of heaven, the stork, the crane, and the swallow, Jer. viii. 7 ; sometimes to the little ant, Prov. vi. 6 ; xxx. 25 ; and all to learn our duty. David learned humility by beholding the moon and the stars, Psa. viii. 3, 4 ; and Christ grounds many of his excellent sermons upon various daily occurrences, as we see in the parable of the sower and the seed, the tares of the field, and the net cast into the sea ; the leaven, the mustard seed, the fruitless fig tree, and many others. What heavenly use doth he make of earthly things, that we may of these earthly materials frame to ourselves a Jacob’s ladder to ascend to heaven ! for all those visibles will raise us up to behold invisibles, and give us a Pisgah sight of the heavenly Canaan, even of those things within the veil.”

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GARDEN MEDITATION

I.—UPON THE EARTH.

WALKING in the garden in the cool•of the day, among other things that offered themselves to my consideration, I observed my mother the earth, out of whose womb I had my being. I considered how near of kin I was to those senseless clods that lay under my feet; that I was made of the same matter, only a little more refined and moulded up into a better form, and made by God a little breathing clay, and that I shortly must return to my first origin; “for dust thou art,” saith God, “and unto dust shalt thou return,” Gen. iii. 19. These and the like thoughts had a varied operation upon my soul: sometimes they led me to admire the Creator, who, out of so rude and undigested a mass, such coarse materials, could make so glorious a production as the body of man is, and endue it with such excellent parts and faculties, making it a cabinet fit to hold that precious jewel, the soul. When I had a little considered this, I began to glory that I was made a man, and did not remain a senseless clod,

But, on the other side, when I considered my original, and remembered the rock whence I was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence I was digged, Isa. li. 1; and that I could say “to corruption, Thou art my father: and to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister,” Job xvii. 14; I, w^{ch}, was even now proud that I was a man, began to vail my plumes, and to wonder at my own folly. I saw there was little cause to boast of birth or blood, of great parentage or relations. It is a shame and sin for an angel to be proud, much more for a worm of the earth.

O my soul, bless God that thou wast made a man, and not a clod of clay; a rational creature, and not a brute beast. Thou wast clay in the hands of this Potter, and mightest have been the most despicable creature that ever dropped from his fingers; but he has made thee little lower than the angels, and crowned thee with glory and honour, Psa. viii. 5. What cause, then, hast thou to admire thy Creator, who made thee thus to differ, and made thee capable of communing with him here, and enjoying him for ever? But beware of pride, that reigning condemning sin, which turned angels out of heaven, Adam out of paradise, and has since cast many thousands into hell. If ever tempted to boast of the greatness of thy stock, or the honour of thy progenitors, ascend as high as thy great progenitor, the earth; who opened her womb to bear us all, and ere long will open her mouth to receive us all, when we shall be resolved into our first matter. “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it,” Eccl. xii. 7. It is true,

thou hadst a more noble Father, in whose image thou wast made; but this image is lost, and thou art become more deformed than thy mother.

O my God, as thou hast endued me with more noble faculties than many other of thy creatures, that I might be better able to serve thee, enable me so to do; renew thy image in me, which was lost by the fall, and give me thy grace, without which my condition will be worse than that of beasts which perish, and whose misery ends with their life. Where much is given, much will be required, Luke xii. 48. As thou hast made me a man, let me act as a rational man, and answer the ends of my creation.

Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return, Gen. iii. 19.

Behold, I am but dust and ashes, Gen. xviii. 27.

Who dwell in houses of clay, and whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth! Job iv. 19.

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it, Eccl. xii. 7.

The first man is of the earth, earthly: the second man is the Lord from heaven.—As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly, 1 Cor. xv. 47, 49.

II.—UPON A BARREN PLOT OF GROUND.

WHEN I perceived one plot in my garden fruitful, and another barren, and observed the difference between the one and the other; how fresh and fragrant the fruitful plot was, and how agreeable its appearance, diapered as it was with variously coloured flowers, beautiful and lovely; and again, how loathsome and unseemly the other looked, where nothing appeared but briars and thorns, weeds, and stones, and rubbish:—I began to consider it was yet possible to reduce this plot into a better form, and turn it to a better use. Hereupon I caused the rubbish to be cleared away, the weeds to be plucked up, and the stones picked out; and, after I had digged and manured it, I had at length a result answerable to my expectation; for, when it was sown with better seed, it brought forth better fruit.

The unloveliness of this plot, when overgrown with weeds and rubbish, produced the following meditation:—I thought it strikingly represented a heart barren of grace and goodness, but fruitful of sin and wickedness; such a heart is more odious to God than this plot was to me, while a holy humble Christian is lovely in his eye: the one is like a watered garden that yields a sweet savour, like a garden of spices, Cant. iv. 12—15: the other only brings forth fruit fit for the fire; all the seed sown upon it is lost, and

choked with briars and thorns ; and all the rain that falls upon it does but make the weeds more rank and flourishing. " Their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah : their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter," Deut. xxxii. 32. " They hatch cockatrice' eggs, and weave the spider's web," Isa. lix. 5. " The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God : but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing ; whose end is to be burned," Heb. vi. 7, 8. The fruitful Christian, watered by the word and Spirit, bringing forth a harvest of holiness, resembles the trees fit for food, which were not to be destroyed, Deut. xx. 19 ; whereas fruitless trees are for the fire, Matt. iii. 10. But oh, how much of this sterile barren ground is amongst us ! how many are there who resist all the offered means of their recovery ; and when God expects fruit, produce wild fruit : and yet this barren ground, if well manured, and if God breathe upon it, may prove good land. This consideration made me, with the servant in the gospel, cry out, Lord, spare them one year more, that I may dig about them, and dung them, Luke xiii. 8, that it may not be my fault, nor laid to my charge ; that they perish.

O my soul, art not thou this barren plot, where nothing but briars and brambles can thrive, where at least little good fruit appears ? God has done much more for thee, hedged thee about by his providence, watered thee with the dew of

heaven, sent many of his servants to manure thee; whence then these tares and weeds? was not good seed sown? why hast thou not answered the great Husbandman's expectation? what could God have done more for his vineyard, than he has done for thee? Well, look to it; if thou remain fruitless, ere long he will pluck up thy hedge, pluck down thy wall, take away thy fence, cease caring for thee, and turn in the wild boar to devour; he will lay down his basket, and take up his axe. Oh the patience of a long-suffering God! who has borne with thee for many years, but will ere long, if thou remain fruitless, pronounce the sentence, "Cut him down; why cumbereth he the ground," Luke xiii. 7. If this be the danger of barren souls, seek to be fruitful thyself, and do what in thee lieth to make others fruitful also. "Herein," saith Christ, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit," John xv. 8.

O my God, Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but thou givest the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 6. The harp yields no sound till touched by the hand of the musician, and the heart will never be made good till thou strikest the stroke. It is God alone can say to dry bones, Live; man can but speak to the ear, it is God must speak to the heart. Lord, speak home to my heart, and the work will be done. If means and ordinances would have sufficed, the work ere now would have been effected. Lord, leave me not to other husbandmen, for they cannot make me fruitful. O be thou my Gardener, and my soul shall flourish; blow upon thy spices, and they will send forth a sweet savour.

III.—ON THE EARTH BRINGING FORTH WEEDS.

I OBSERVED that it was the natural propensity of the earth to bring forth briars, thorns, and weeds, and such unprofitable productions, and that it fed and fostered them of its own accord, without any help of man; nay, man without much labour and toil cannot destroy or keep them under: whereas choice flowers, profitable herbs, wheat and barley, and other useful grain, spring not up at so easy a rate; there must be pains taken, digging, ploughing, harrowing, setting, sowing, weeding, and a great deal more, or no good crop can be expected. This observation made me think, that this was the fruit of the curse laid upon the earth for man's sake. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," Gen. iii. 17—19.

This propensity also of the earth to bring forth weeds, and to starve the choicest plants, made me think it resembled the heart of man by nature, which is a fruitful field for sin and folly, but barren of any thing that is good. Evil thoughts, wicked words, and bad actions grow naturally there; but the herb of grace must be planted by the finger of God, and watered with the dew of heaven, or it will not prosper. Most of the good

seed sown there by the preachers of the word is lost, and comes to nothing; either it falls among stones, or thorns, or by the highway side, and thus is either starved, or choked, or devoured. Except the heart be well manured, and the nature of the soil changed; except it be well fenced and guarded, yea, watched and observed, nothing that is good will grow there. • It is not in vain that God bids us break up the fallow ground of our hearts, and “sow not among thorns,” Jer. iv. 3; Hos. x. 12. He sees it needful to plough deep furrows by affliction, before he can reach the roots of the weeds.

O my soul, art not thou this earth lying under the curse, where nothing profitable thrives and prospers? How comes it otherwise to pass, that thou art so prone to sin and so backward to obedience? vices naturally spring in thee, without help or labour, and are rank and flourishing; but grace thrives not without much care, if at all. How comes it to pass, that so much seed has been sown, and so little fruit appears; that if the devil, by temptation, sows his tares there, he need neither weed them nor look after them, the heart cherishes and nourishes them as her own; but the herb of grace is with difficulty reared. A good thought is hardly brought to a good resolution, or a good resolution to a good act. O my soul, see that the soil of thy heart be changed, and true grace be planted there, and the weeds of sin rooted out, or thou art still under the curse.

O my God, rather plough me and harrow me, rather pluck and tear me in pieces by

affliction, than suffer me to be barren or useless ground. Be thou the husbandman, and my heart will be fruitful and yield her increase; blow upon thy garden, and the spices will send forth a sweet smell; let the Sun of righteousness shine upon it, and the dew of heaven water it, and let it be planted by thy own hand, and fenced about, that the wild boar of the forest may not devour it, and it will be no longer barren. Speak the word, and the work will be done.

God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, Gen. vi. 5.

The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth, Gen. viii. 21.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, Jer. xvii. 9.

Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, Matt. xv. 19.

The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, Rom. viii. 7.

The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like—they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God, Gal. v. 19—21.

IV.—UPON A BUSH OF THORNS.

OBSERVING a bush of thorns springing up in a place where I expected better fruit, I caused them to be taken up and put into a gap, where a fence was wanting for the securing the garden, and the preserving the herbs and flowers from damage and detriment: this occasioned the following meditation. I thought, as these, being fruits of the curse, spring up of their own accord without labour or toil; so do sin and corruption naturally spring up in the soul without any pains: and as the earth owns these, so does the heart own sin as its own proper product: God cursed the earth for man's sake, Gen. iii. 17, 18, and thorns and thistles it has ever since brought forth. This made me consider how faithful God is in the execution of his threats as well as of his promises; and of how dangerous a nature sin is, which produces such effects. I considered also, that as some use was made of thorns for the defence of better fruit, so does the wise God make some use of wicked men for the good of his people. Sometimes he uses them to scour off their rust, and make them brighter, whereby they often sully themselves, and when their work is done are turned off: sometimes they are his rod to afflict his saints; "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger," Isa. x. 5; but when the child is

reformed, the rod is burned : and sometimes he has made them a defence for his church ; " The earth helped the woman, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth," Rev. xii. 16. An example of this we have in David, when he was in great distress, compassed about by Saul, on this side the mountain and on that side the mountain, in imminent danger, ready, like a trembling partridge, to have fallen into the hands of the greedy falcon ; a messenger came to Saul, saying, " The Philistines have invaded the land ;" and he withdrew his army and departed, 1 Sam. xxiii. 26—28. These Philistines were but thorns, yet were they a defence to David and his followers, and God at last will deal with wicked men as with thorns, reserve them for the fire ; for what good they do to the godly is for ends of their own, and not for their sakes. The Philistines minded not David's good ; nor the king of Assyria, God's people's reformation ; nor Haman, Mordecai's and the Jews' advancement.

O my soul, can God turn a curse into a blessing, and can he bring good out of evil, and of these thorns make a fence for better fruit ? admire his wisdom, and bless his name. Has he done thee good by these thorns, whose nature were to do hurt ? bless him for it ; he might have made thee the thorn, and for the present have stopped a gap with thee, and reserved thee to everlasting burning : if he has grafted thee into a better stock, and thou bringest forth better fruit, no thanks to thee. And if thou seest any as yet retaining their old natures, despair not of their recovery ; God may make better use of them ; a persecuting

Saul may become a preaching Paul, and a wicked Manasseh a true convert; or he may make them otherwise serviceable to his people. Be not therefore like the disciples who would have rashly called fire from heaven on the inhospitable Samaritans; it is thy wisdom rather to see thou be not of that number, or otherwise thou wilt be reserved for the same condemnation.

O my God, such as these I was, and such I had been hadst thou not made the difference; and too much of that nature remains in me to this day. Oh that thou wouldest thoroughly change me! plant me into that noble vine, that I may bring forth better fruit; yea, purge me, that I may bring forth more fruit.

Deliver my soul from the wicked,—which are thy hand, Psa. xvii. 13, 14.

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, Psa. lxxvi. 10.

The Lord saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure.—Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him.—For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me, Isa. xliv. 28; xlvi. 1, 4, 5.

V.—UPON BIRDS PICKING UP THE SEED.

WHEN I had sown my seed in the garden, and perceived that what lay uncovered was made a prey to the fowls of the air, this brought to my mind our Saviour's parable of the sower, Matt. xiii. wherein he discovers the reason why, though so much seed be sown, so little fruit appears. The fault is not in the seed, for that is good, the good word of God, though sometimes the enemy may mix tares with it. Neither is the fault always in the sower, though sometimes it may be ; for the most part it lies in the ground, in the heart, where the seed should be entertained ; we find here there was but one-fourth part good ; and oh, that the one-tenth part of those that hear the word were really such. Some of the ground was highway ground, not fitted and prepared for a crop, never ploughed deep enough ; the seed indeed was sown *upon* it, but never *in* it ; it was never covered or harrowed by meditation, and therefore remained liable to be picked up by the wicked one, who will be one at church whoever is absent. Some we find was sown in stony places, where it had little earth, and less root : and thus many rejoice to hear the word at first, and have some sudden impressions of goodness ; but the root of the matter is not in them, and therefore the impressions

wither away. Some seed was sown among thorns, and these sprung up, and choked it ; the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches are such thorns. And there was but a little good ground, and that also brought forth variably, some an hundred, some sixty, and some thirty fold. Every man cannot excel : we should strive after the highest pitch of godliness, and not content ourselves with a low frame of spirit ; but not despair, though we fall short of it. God accounts it good ground that brings forth any good fruit to maturity. This consideration made me reflect upon my own condition, and call myself to an account what sort of ground my heart was, since so much seed had been sown, and so little fruit appeared.

O my soul, how comes it thus to pass, that thou art barren and unfruitful ? how comes it to pass, the seed is lost after so much labour, pains, and care ; so much manuring and cultivating ? What could God have done more for thee by the way of means, than he hath done ? Why then bringest thou forth wild grapes ? Art not thou the highway ground ? and has not Satan hardened thy heart, that it is become sermon-proof, and ordinance-proof ? and does he not pick up the seed which lies loose upon it, and is not covered by meditation ? Art not thou a forgetful hearer ? and how can that fructify that is thus stolen away ? Or was the seed not sown among stones ? no wonder if fruit appear not, where a root cannot be had. Trust not to every stirring of the affections. Herod heard John Baptist gladly, Mark vi. 20, and reformed many things ;

but if the stone of the heart be not removed, and a heart of flesh given thee, how can corn be expected upon a rock that was never softened, mortified, or made fruitful? or was it not sown among thorns? didst thou not suffer the thoughts, the cares, the fears of the world, or the love, desire of, or delight in riches, to choke it? When the heart brings forth such fruits, the word cannot prosper. O my soul, if this be thy case, beware of it, and prepare thy heart to receive the seed, and harrow it in by meditation. What good will meat do, if not eaten and digested? or the word, if not sent home to the conscience, and reduced into practice? Empty thy heart of all distrustful cares and fears, break up the fallow ground of thy heart, and sow not among thorns.

O my God, if thou be not the husbandman, there will be no good crop; if thou direct not the plough, there will be no good furrow; if thou bless not the seed and the labour, all is in vain; Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God gives the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 6. If God set not a hand to the work, according to the saying of the Reformer, "Old Adam will be too hard for young Melanthon," and the tares will thrive better than the good seed; man can but speak to the ear, God can speak to the heart. No medicine can heal, if God be not the physician. No food can nourish, if God be not the nurse. Lord, reach my heart, cure my wounds, remove my distempers, empty my soul of froth and vanity, that the water

of life may be received. Say to my ears, "Ephphatha, Be opened," Mark vii. 34, and they will hear; and to my heart, Be soft, and it will be done; say to these dry bones, Live, Ezek. xxxvii. 4, 5. Take my stony heart into thy furnace, or what good will it do to preach to a stone? all the water that falls upon it will be spilt, and all the means of grace lost. Lord, speak the word, and it will be done; command my heart, and it will obey.

Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it, Matt. vii. 24—27.

Take heed how ye hear, Luke viii. 18.

We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip, Heb. ii. 1.

Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves, James i. 22.

VI.—UPON PLUCKING OFF THE TOPS OF WEEDS.

IN a dry season, when the bottles of heaven were stopped, and showers withheld from the earth, so that it was parched and dry, I observed some persons, who could not easily pluck up the roots of weeds, tearing off their heads, which, when they had done, the garden seemed pleasant to the beholders, and gave content for a while to its owners, who imagined there had been a thorough reformation; but not long after, when a shower of rain distilled upon it, the cheat appeared, the weeds sprung up as fresh and flourishing as before, yea, like the hydra, with more heads than at first, thus evincing how partial the reformation was. This observation afforded the following meditation: I thought it much resembled a partial reformation in the soul, when men begin their amendment at the wrong end, or take a wrong course to kill the tree of sin, breaking off a few outward enormities, but leaving the depravity of the heart alone. As might be anticipated, this, when it is watered with Satan's temptations and the world's allurements, and animated with fit occasions and suitable opportunities, springs forth afresh, it may be, with more virulence than before, and thus it appears that even the sins no longer visible were not killed, but laid aside. An evident example we have of

this in Herod, who, convinced by John Baptist's preaching that his courses were not good, relinquished many of his sins, and, it is said, did many things, but still left the principle of sin untouched, to the undoing of his soul. Soon after, accordingly, his wickedness broke out with greater violence than ever, and like a torrent of water, dammed up for a time only, ran more furiously, even to the taking away of John Baptist's head. Thus it is too with many seeming converts, who afterwards prove wicked apostates, and persecute the truth they formerly professed: the root of the matter was not in them. Hazael did not believe so much wickedness to lodge in his heart as the prophet spake of, and as afterwards actually appeared. Such apostates are often Satan's most devoted servants, and very hardly, if ever, are reclaimed.

O my soul, how stands the case with thee? Hast thou not weeded thy own garden thus, and rather torn off the tops of thy sins than plucked them up by the root? How comes it else to pass that upon every shower of temptation they are so apt to spring up again. Consider, attentively, if thou wilt not kill sin, sin will kill thee; if the root be dead, the branches will soon wither; but if the root live, the branches will revive. The way to cleanse the stream is to purify the fountain; and heart-reformation is the best way to life-reformation. Hypocrisy within will, like a sore, at length break forth; and a depraved heart will, ere long, vitiate the life also.

O my God, without thy assistance all my endeavours will prove vain; the devil, the world,

and my own deceitful heart will beguile me. Let me not strive in my own strength, nor fail of thine assisting grace. Rather cast me into the furnace, than suffer my corruption and dross to remain in me; and rather plough deeper furrows by affliction, than suffer the roots of the weeds to remain in my heart. Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned; convert me, and I shall be converted; let me not take up with a partial reformation, and let nothing less than the death of sin give me content.

Make the tree good, and his fruit good, Matt. xii. 33.

Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also, Matt. xxiii. 26.

Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom, James iii. 11—13.

Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded, James iv. 8.

VII.—UPON THE CARE MEN TAKE OF THEIR
GARDENS.

WHEN I considered how careful many are to keep their gardens in order, and what cost and time are expended to this end ; how much labour is employed in walling, fencing, and securing the ground ; in digging, manuring, weeding, and much more : there must not a rarity be wanting, which labour or money can procure ; there must not a weed be seen, nor herb nor flower out of order ; what is dead or wanting must be supplied, and what is superfluous must be cast away ; the tenderest must be secured from frost and scorching sun, and the whole must be formed after the newest fashion : the alleys and walks must be swept, and trimmed, and levelled ; the grass mown and kept under, and all so exactly done that it may appear to be an earthly paradise, a place of pleasure and delights. When I observed, also, that all this while these very persons, so curious and so neat in shadows, yet neglect the substance, and suffer their own souls, and the souls of their children, servants, and near relations, the only gardens God takes delight in, to be sadly out of order ; and though they make choice of the most skilful and diligent labourers for the one, will leave things to their course, without regarding who scy whole tares and poppies,

thorns and thistles in the other;—I have often wondered that those who are such good husbands for the body, should be such bad husbands for the soul; and those who take so much pains for a little imaginary pleasure here, should altogether neglect the true pleasures and everlasting joys at the right hand of God hereafter. Oh the stupendous folly of men, to prefer pebbles before pearls, and gold before grace, and a handful of flowers before a heartful of holiness, and the shadow before the substance, and earth before heaven, and a garden before paradise. Well, however they act now, the time is coming when they will find their mistake, and change their judgment; when grace will be accounted the choicest flower, and holiness prove the best fashion.

O my soul, art thou not guilty thyself of those sins which thou so sharply chargest upon others? Hast not thou thyself been more prodigal of thy pains, thy time, thy cost, for mere trifles, than ever thou hast been about thy greater concerns? And is any man's folly more conspicuous than thy own? Hast thou not had thine ears open to the bewitching syren songs of pleasure, and been more charmed with earthly sensual delight than with communion with God in his worship and service? When the world has smiled upon thee, how unwilling hast thou been to die and to be with God! and hast laid out thyself, thy strength, thy time, too much for earthly enjoyments, to the neglect of heavenly riches. Pluck, then, the beam out of thine own eye before thou remove the mote of thy brother; get thy affections weaned

from the world, and thy eye fixed upon better riches and more enduring pleasures, lest God give thee these for thy portion; and what then wilt thou do in the latter end?

O my God, what shall I say to thee? how shall I answer thee? my iniquity is found out this day to be hateful. Had I spent but my time for spiritual advantages, which I have prodigally wasted for very trifles, it might have been much better with me; had I planted and sowed in a more fruitful field, I might have had a better crop. Lord, wean me from the love of carnal delights, though it be with the gall and wormwood of afflictions, and suffer me not to surfeit on the world's dainties, nor leave me to my own will, lest I undo myself; see me with food convenient, and it suffice me.

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Keep thy heart with all diligence, (margin, above all keeping,) Prov. v. 23.

Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life, Deut. iv. 9.

Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful, Luke x: 41, 42.

Keep yourselves from idols, 1 John v. 21.

Keep yourselves in the love of God, Jude 21.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation, Matt. xxvi. 41.

VIII.—UPON A NEGLECTED GARDEN.

WHEN I saw by experience how soon a neglected garden loses its form and beauty, and comes to be a rude unorderly heap, grown over with weeds and nettles, infested with noxious reptiles; the wall broken down, the fence decayed; beasts and swine making prey of it,—the one tearing off the tops, the other digging up the roots of the tender plants, the herbs and flowers dying, withering, or decaying, choked by the weeds, or starved for want of nutriment. nothing flourishing but weeds, and the whole appearing more like a wilderness than a garden: this sight brought to my mind the state of the poor soul, when it is neglected and not heedfully observed. All then runs to ruin, and tends to confusion; corruption and sin get the upper hand, and grace is kept under; the fence is let down, the watch is neglected, and the devil, that wild boar of the forest, destroys the tender vines, roots up every good inclination, spoils every good intention and resolution, and lays all waste. How many have I known, who, when they have been under good masters, good parents, good ministers, have been very hopeful and towardly, and were likely to become good instruments in the church for God's glory, if not pillars in the house of God: while they received encouragement in religious courses,

The flowers of grace seemed to flourish, good desires and resolutions to bud forth, and promising parts gave hopes of future increase. But when they had changed their habitations or their company, and were left either to themselves or those careless of them, they soon grew loose and heathenish, and given to sensuality. In a short time they lost that which they seemed to have, and their souls looked no more like a watered garden, but a barren wilderness; and the dam which religious education had erected, being broken down, the stream ran more violently.

O my soul, is not this in part thy case? Are there not sensible decays of love in thee? Is not thy zeal for God abated, and thy courage in his cause decayed? Are not thy graces choked with weeds? Where is the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thy espousals, when thou' went after God in the wilderness? Hast thou not, with the church of Ephesus, lost thy first love? Rev. ii. 4. Dost thou not grow more strange with thy God, and does not God grow more strange with thee? Where is that heart and fervour which did appear in thee? that life and activity in his service? Has not the cooling wind of the world abated this, and thou beginnest to be, as the world calls it, more moderate; or, as God calls it, more lukewarm; the weeds of sin begin to overtop the herb of grace? Do not these grow rank and flourishing, while grace grows weak and feeble? Grace, like the house of Saul, grows weaker and weaker; when sin, like the house of David, gathers strength. Well, beware betimes; if thou grow lukewarm, God will cast

thee out of his mouth ; if thou bear wild grapes, he will pluck down thy fence, and lay thee waste ; if thou art barren, he will cut thee down, and cast thee into the fire.

O my God, without thy assistance I shall bring forth no fruit ; or worse than none, wild grapes, grapes of sin and disobedience. The weeds of sins, and the thorns of cares, will suffer no good herb nor flower to flourish. Oh pluck up those weeds, keep under those thorns, and make up those decays in this thy garden ; let the north wind and the south "blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out," Cant. iv. 16, that I may be serviceable to thee, and profitable to man ; let my fruits be ripened, my graces advanced, by the breathing of the Holy Ghost : then shall I serve thee with thy own, and give thee of thy own, 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

Take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law—to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, Josh. xxii. 5.

Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently, Psa. cxix. 4.

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, Heb. ii. 3.

Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless, 2 Pet. iii. 14.

IX.—UPON THE FADING OF BEAUTIFUL
FLOWERS. .

WALKING in the garden, I fixed my eyes upon the flowers there growing. I considered the variety, beauty, and splendour of them ; how glorious they appeared after a cooling shower of rain, and the refreshing beams of the shining sun ; how pleasantly they looked ; how sweet they smelted, filling the ambient air with their sweet savour, delighting the beholder's senses with their colour, shape, and scent. But when, on the other side, I considered how vain and fading all this glory was, and their beauty as the morning dew, which, when the sun appears in his strength, quickly vanishes ; when I considered that the same day sees them in the height of their pride, and in their lowest debasement—to-day they are, saith Christ, and to-morrow they are cast into the oven, Matt. vi. 30—methought this did forcibly exhibit the vanity of all human felicity, how transitory it is and uncertain, and how little solidity is to be found in any objects of desire under the sun. Now they flatter, and seem beautiful to the eye, and suddenly they wither and disappear. If we look upon their little lord, and the owner of these things, we shall find him as frail and transitory as they are : this day you may see him in the strength of his youth,

and his bones full of marrow; and to-morrow death seizes upon him, and the worm sweetly feeds upon him, Job xxiv. 20; they are cut down as the grass, and wither as the flower of the field, Psa. xxxvii. 2. How frequently does Scripture compare man to grass, and to a fading flower? "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass," Isa. xl. 6, 7. "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever," Psa. xcii. 7. And as man is thus frail and transitory, so are all sub-lunary things; there is no stability in them. They are like the moon, every day showing a new face; now waxing, now waning: or like the sea, sometimes ebbing, sometimes flowing; now a full sea, and a few hours after low water. Often we may see men flourish like green bay-trees, and suddenly taken away; now in the height of honour, and suddenly in the gulf of disgrace; now flourishing in riches, and quickly pinched with poverty. As it respects beauty, those that have most gloried in it, in a short time by a disease have become deformed. As to friends, those that love to-day, often hate to-morrow: and the like we may say of all earthly enjoyments.

O my soul, if earthly delights, how pleasing soever, be so fading and transitory, here thou seest thy folly in spending so much of thy time and solicitude on them. Beauty is but skin deep, and when the frost of sickness, or the wind of old

age comes, it withers. Riches are no surer, they make themselves wings, and fly away, Prov. xxiii. 5. Strength will decay, and Samson himself cannot grapple with death. Honour is the emptiest of bubbles; and he that this day is ascending the highest round of the ladder of promotion, may suddenly fall, as Haman did. But there is a Beauty which will never fade; grace and holiness will never change colour. There are riches which will be certain, laid up where neither rust corrupts, nor thieves can steal or plunder; there are honours which will last to eternity; pleasures at God's right hand that never shall have an end; there is meat that perisheth not, but endures to eternal life. Spend not thy time in seeking after these gilded nothings and painted vanities.

O my God, bestow those things upon me that will do me good: garments that will adorn me and make me beautiful in the eyes of God and good men; food which will nourish my soul; and riches that will make me rich indeed; put me not off with such trifles as the world affords; the riches of Christ, the jewels of grace, the crown of glory, are worth wishing for, working for, suffering for, striving, fighting, yea, dying for, when other things are not worth half the pains which usually are spent upon them. Lord, no portion but thyself will satisfy; no pleasures will please, but those at thy right hand. Lord, give me these, though thou take from me all the rest.

The fashion of this world passeth away, 1 Cor. vii. 31.

X.—UPON STONES IN THE GARDEN.

OBSERVING in the garden many stones mixed with other soil, and considering how fruitless and unprofitable they were ; that though they had the same husbandry bestowed upon them, the same sun to shine upon them, and were watered with the same showers, yet they were in no degree better, softer, or more pliable ; still they remained stones, fruitless and unprofitable : yea, though I broke them in pieces, I could not mollify them, or make them fruitful ; neither axe nor hammer, fire nor water, could change their nature ; neither fair means nor foul, the summer's sun nor winter's frost, could change them ; they were still the same. This observation led me to the ensuing meditation. It brought to my mind the nature of an unrenewed heart. Oh how strikingly does a stone represent this to us ! The unrenewed heart is of the nature of a stone : mercies cannot melt it, judgments cannot break it ; good seed sown in it brings nothing to perfection, neither can it take any deep root, as we see in the parable of the stony ground. This ground, though ever so carefully husbanded, even by Christ himself, the wisest Husbandman, yet brings no fruit to maturity. I have sometimes wondered how wicked men could sit under the powerful means of grace and ministry of the word,

and listen to the terrors of the Lord, and yet never startle. The sins which their consciences know they are deeply guilty of, are again and again condemned to hell, and it is proved that those who live in such sins shall never go to heaven; even the chapters and verses are alleged, where God doth sentence such sinners to hell, and exclude them out of heaven; yet they remain as insensible as the seats they sit on. On the other side, the melting promises of the gospel, and the offer of God, and Christ, and heaven, and everlasting glory and happiness, make not so deep an impression upon a man as would the offer of one shilling, nay of one penny. Does not this plainly prove, that these men's hearts are senseless stones? Now as it is the nature of some stones that fire will not melt them, water will not soften them, nothing will mollify them; so it is of wicked men, neither mercies nor judgments will work upon them. Pharaoh was such a stone; nothing would work upon him: after all the judgments executed on him, his heart continued obdurate still.

O my soul, this was thy case, this was thy condition by nature; out of the same rock wast thou hewn, and out of the same hole of the pit wast thou digged. Thy heart was as hard as the nether mill-stone, and resembled the flinty rock, that could neither bend nor bow, and was as insensible to spiritual things as the stones in the street: much water has been spilt upon this rock, which could not be gathered up again; many a melting sermon thou hast heard, and hast remained stone still. How is the case at present

with thee ? ' What is thy present condition ? Has God melted thee in his furnace ? has he changed thy nature ? has he fashioned thee anew, and moulded thee into a better shape, and given thee a better form ? has he taken away the heart of stone, and given thee a heart of flesh ? has he fitted thee for his own work ; and hewn and squared thee for his own building, to be united to Jesus Christ the chief Corner-stone ? If so, bless God for it, for it was his own work. But if thou retain still thy old inflexible nature, as hard and senseless as ever, as rough and craggy, notwithstanding all the pains God has bestowed upon thee, well mayest thou fear thou wilt be cast out, as unfit for God's use, and reserved for the fire of hell.

O my God, great pains and cost thou hast been at with me, but I have not answered thy pains, nor thy cost ; I remain still rough and hard, notwithstanding all the blows of thy workmen. But, Lord, if thou wouldest blow the fire, I should melt ; if thou wouldest lay thy hand upon the workman's axe, I should be squared and fitted for the work. Lord, rather lay great blows upon me, than suffer me to be unpolished or cast out ; take away the heart of stone, give me a heart of flesh, that I may melt at thy mercies, and tremble at thy judgments.

God is able of stones to raise up children unto Abraham, Matt. iii. 9.

To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, Heb. iii. 15.

XI.—UPON A NEST OF ANTS.

FINDING in the garden a heap of ants at the root of a tree, which I looked upon as no friends, but enemies to an orchard, I disturbed them with my foot, and they soon took the alarm. I then took notice how these industrious creatures behaved themselves when thus disturbed : they were all in confusion ; some ran this way, and some that, and no one knew where, or how to settle ; and yet I observed every one laying hold of something, and getting some burden upon his back, though it knew not where to bear it.

The confused stir which thus happened among these little insects, represented to me the confusion which is abroad in the world, wherein are millions of men ; every one driving on some particular design, though they go various ways to work : some pursue after riches, some honours, and some pleasures, and yet agree not on the means to attain their end. Those that aim at riches, tread not all in the same steps. Some go a more plain way than others do, and by laborious toiling, care, and pains, seek to acquire ; these are no one's foes but their own, which they become by spending so much time on their temporal interests, that they neglect their greater concerns. Others, by more subtle but less honest expedients, labour to overreach their neighbours ;

they make haste to be rich, but cannot be innocent; these ofttimes, bring a coal with them, which fires their own nests: ill gotten goods seldom prosper, and the third heir seldom enjoys them. Some in the pursuit of honour take the way of virtue, and seek distinction by desert; but these are few: the greater number endeavour to ascend the steps of promotion by fawning, and flattery, and such indirect courses; but though these are the most numerous, yet ofttimes they fall ere they come to the top of the ladder, and are always treading in slippery places: the former way, though most painful, is the surest and safest; for honour follows virtue, as the shadow doth the substance. Others that pursue pleasure differ also; some seek after more innocent delights; others esteem no fruit worth enjoying, but what is forbidden, and desperately pursue such pleasures as perish in the using; " and the end of that mirth is heaviness," Prov. xiv. 13. In a word, some are building castles in the air, and never live to finish them; others are getting goods, and know not who shall enjoy them: some are gathering together by means lawful and unlawful; and others are scattering abroad what is thus gathered, and soon spend all: some are promising themselves content if they had a lordship, others if they had a dukedom, and some if they had a kingdom; all which, if attained, brings them no nearer satisfaction than before. And thus there is a confused tumult in the world, every man driving on his own designs, and God all the while tacitly carrying on his, perhaps quite contrary to theirs.

O my soul, lose not thyself, thy pains, thy precious time, as many do, in seeking that in the world which no man was ever yet able to find there—content, satisfaction, and happiness; these are not sown in the furrows of thy field, and therefore are not to be found in full bags and barns. Content grows not in nature's garden, and those that seek happiness beneath the sun are mistaken; the enjoyment of God in glory is our complete happiness, and nothing else will give the soul content, let the world say what it will to the contrary: anxious cares, and fretting fears, and jealousies about earthly enjoyments, are so far from being the way to it, that they choke the word which is the means to attain it. The riches, honours and pleasures the world affords, bear no more proportion to true riches, true pleasures, and true honours, than painted fire on the wall to true fire, or a king upon a stage to a king upon the throne; they only bear an empty name and notion: those that pursue them will find their mistake, and that they were not worth their time, and pains, and care. But God and Christ, and heaven and glory, are worth our labour; we cannot buy this gold too dear.

O my God, this has been my folly, to hunt after these shadows, and neglect the race where a crown of glory was to be the prize, and my own soul lay at stake. I have laid out my money for that which is not bread, and my labour for that which satisfieth not, Isa. iv. 2. I have been one of these busy creatures, that have made a great and confused bustle in the world, to little purpose. Help me now to devote myself

to thy service, and give up not only my name, but my heart to Christ: then may I expect a better reward than the world hath given me, and better happiness than the creatures can afford.

Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them, Psa. xxxix. 6.

I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit, Eccl. i. 14.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.—But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you, Matt. vi. 19—21, 33.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light, Matt. xi. 28—30.

XII.—UPON THE DILIGENCE OF THE ANTS.

UPON the former occasion, when I had, as before mentioned, disturbed the ants and put them into a confusion, I observed what would be the issue, and saw, when the present fear and amazement was a little over which put them into that disorder, they unanimously applied themselves to rectify what I had disordered with my foot, and to repair the breaches I had made in their stronghold, every one laying hold of something, and carrying it to the common heap.

The diligence and industry of these creatures brought to my mind the counsel of Solomon to the sluggard; and oh that I could speak it loud enough to myself and others that are guilty; “ Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest,” Prov. vi. 6—8. Naturalists and others have written much of the contrivance of these insects, that they not only gather their store, but also draw it forth, say some, in the sun-shine, to dry it, and keep it from putrefaction. O man, how art thou degenerated, that wast made but a little lower than the angels, and wast endued with reason to rule these inferior creatures; and yet now must be sent to learn wisdom, not only from the ox

and the ass, Isa. i. 3; not only from the stork, the turtle, the crane, and the swallow, Jer. viii. 7; but down to the lowest form, the smallest insects, the most despicable of all others: these, by an instinct of nature, gather their food in summer for winter; and shall man, who has reason with which to foresee danger, be careless? Alas, too many, as if they had forgotten that the Saviour had said, "One thing is needful," Luke x. 42, live carelessly, and take no account of futurity. They are like the foolish virgins, they seek not for oil till their lamps are out, and the bridegroom be come; or, like the wicked servant, bury their talents in a napkin.

O my soul, thou hast a lesson for thy instruction, an example for thy imitation; these little, yet diligent creatures justly reprove thee for sloth and negligence. Many of thy years are past, and little of thy work is done; thou hast been playing in the dust, and though called, neglected to come home to thy father's house; thou hast trifled out the morning, and now "the shadows of the evening are stretched out," Jer. vi. 4, and the day far spent. Beware of idleness; this will leave thee short of heaven: double thy diligence, and amend thy pace; "give diligence to make thy calling and election sure," 2 Pet. i. 10. Be diligent in God's work, that when the enemy comes to tempt, he may find thee well employed; when Christ comes to judge thee, he may not find thee idle; when death comes to call, thou mayest be ready; when the Bridegroom comes, thou mayest have oil in thy vessel, and a lamp ready trimmed in thy hand, and a

wedding garment on thy back. Improve thy talents well, that Christ may say, " Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," Matt. xxv. 21. When others only wish for heaven, do thou work for it.

O my God, I have been one of these loitering truants, that am justly here reproved, and sent again to school to the meanest of thy creatures; their diligence shames my negligence. They have only an instinct of nature to guide them; I have reason, experience, Scripture, and example to stimulate me: they labour only for the body; I for the immortal soul: they for the meat which perisheth; I for that which endureth to eternal life: they for a winter; I for eternity: yet are they diligent, and I negligent: heaven and earth may stand amazed at my folly. Lord, pardon what is past, and incline my heart, for the time to come, to give diligence to make my calling and election sure. Let me so run, that I may obtain; so fight, that I may conquer; and be faithful to death, that I may receive the crown of life, 2 Pet. i. 10; 1 Cor. ix. 26; Rev. ii. 10.

The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer, Prov. xxx. 25.

This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, Phil. iii. 13, 14.

Laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come, 1 Tim. vi. 19.

XIII.—UPON THE GORGEOUS DRESS OF FLOWERS.

WHEN I carefully observed the various dresses, and the curious colours of the herbs and flowers which diapered the garden, and had taken some delight to consider the power of God in them, and how far he condescended to please our fancies and delight our senses; when I saw how gorgeously they were attired, and how beautiful they appeared, it led me up to the fountain-head, even to God, who is beauty and comeliness itself; and the greatest beauty that the world can boast of, is but a spark to this fire, a ray to this sun, and a drop to this ocean. If the creature can be so beautiful, what is the Creator! and if earth be so pleasant, what is heaven! But when I considered also the transitory, fading nature of these short-lived flowers; how soon, when they were in their prime, they withered away and perished; this put me in mind of the vanity of man, who is compared to a flower, which comes up, and is ere long cut down, and never continues in one stay: and not only he, but all earthly enjoyments are short-lived, and soon perish. But when I considered their beauty with their fading nature, I was further reminded by them of our Saviour's words, "Why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and

yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Matt. vi. 28—30. He sends us in the former verses to the sparrows, which, though they neither plough, nor reap, nor gather into barns, are yet fed by Divine providence; so here he sends us to the grass and flowers, which, though frail, vanishing things, are gorgeously attired by him; and all is to lead us to depend upon our Father's providence. For the force of the argument is thus: If God feed these little sparrows, and not one falls to the ground without his providence, and so clothe the withering grass, doubtless he will not suffer his sons and servants to want necessary food and raiment, which as they are better, so are a thousand times dearer to him than the fowls or flowers. There is in every man, by nature, a conceit of self-sufficiency, as if by our own diligence we could provide for ourselves, and are ready to undertake God's part of the work. Now this self-confidence is the daughter of unbelief, as one saith, and the mother of distracting care and anxiety. Our Saviour here, by many arguments, dissuades us from these. There is a care of the head, not only lawful but commendable; but there is a distracting, distrustful, diffident care of the heart here condemned, as when a man hath done his utmost endeavour in the use of lawful means, yet harasses himself about the event, saying, "What if this or that follow? I fear I shall die a beggar," etc. "One day," saith

Dawid, "I shall perish by the hand of Saul," 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. Because God will not let us know how we shall be provided for, therefore we are ready with Israel to question, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Psa. lxxviii. 19.

O my soul, how ~~justly~~ art thou reproved, and sent to these inferior creatures to school? Hast thou not had distracting thoughts and distrustful fears? Hast thou not often been questioning, What shall I eat? or, What shall I drink? or, Wherewithall shall I be clothed? Matt. vi. 31. "What shall become of my wife and children when I am dead?" etc. even contrary to the express command of the great God; as if thou hadst had no Father to provide for thee, or no God to depend upon, or no promise to uphold thee. And though God hath oftentimes silenced thy fears, and hushed thy cares by an unexpected providence, yet, upon the apprehension of new danger, new fears arise; just as murmuring Israel, though they had seen God's wonders in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in feeding them with manna, yet cry out, "Can he furnish a table for us in the wilderness?" Psa. lxxviii. 19. Yea, though thou hast never wanted food, nor raiment, nor any thing truly necessary, and hast a promise that thou shalt never want any thing that is good; and though God has said, ".Leave thy fatherless children; and let thy widows trust in me," Jer. xlix. 11; yet how hard is it to commit wife and children to him, if there be no visible means for their subsistence, or to trust him when means are out of sight. What if thy food be not so dainty, nor thy clothes so fine; if the one nourish thee, and the other keep

thee warm, it matters not. If thou do not fare deliciously every day, nor go in purple and fine linen, thy betters have fared harder, and gone more meanly clad: read Heb. xi. 36—38, and be ashamed of murmuring; “Others had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.” What if thou hast no certain dwelling-house, thy dear Redeemer had not where to lay his head, and those worthies were worse circumstanced than ever thou wast.

O my God, charge not upon me those distrustful thoughts, but strengthen my faith in thy promises. “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief,” Mark ix. 24; and let not this sin have dominion over me. Enable me to say with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,” Job xiii. 15; and with Eli, “It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good,” 1 Sam. iii. 18; and with Paul, “I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus,” Acts xxi. 13.

Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be inoved, Psa. lv. 22.

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you, 1 Peter v. 7.

XIV. — UPON A GARDEN SPOILED THROUGH
NEGLECT OF THE FENCE.

THROUGH neglect of the fence, my garden was much spoiled, and laid waste by cattle; some plucking off the heads of tender buds and plants, some tearing up both root and branch; and also by their treading of it, much defacing its beauty; so that, not without much labour and care, I secured the fence, and made up the breaches; but could not at present, with all my pains, bring it to its former state and pristine beauty. The injury sustained in my garden was somewhat requited by the following meditation.

If a garden, a small plot of ground, cannot be preserved from danger, without care and pains-taking, without a good fence about it, and a watchful eye upon it, because it has so many enemies; how then can the soul, a more curious garden, which is in a thousand times greater danger, be kept safe without a fence and watchful guard? Here are more choice herbs and flowers than the other has; of greater worth, beauty, and virtue; more subject to injury, spoil, and rapine; and which have greater, more subtle, and more malicious enemies, who seek their destruction. The devil, who, we are informed, goes about like "a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," 2 Pet. v. 8, if he find the fence down, or the

watch neglected, and the watchman either asleep or careless, will enter, destroy, and waste ; he envies our condition, that we should enjoy the paradise he left, the comforts he once had ; he has a spite and hatred against God and goodness, and opposes his image wherever he sees it : this is the boar out of the wood who wastes God's vineyard, and the wild beast out of the forest who devours it, Psa. lxxx. 13. He besieges the fort of our souls ; and our own heart, that inbred traitor, watches to surrender it into his hands. A thousand snares and nets are spread for the soul, and it is in continual danger, in every calling, in every condition, in every relation, in every creature we have to do with ; in every duty, nay, in every juncture, some snare or other is laid to entrap us. Youth and old age, sickness and health, prosperity and adversity, honour and disgrace, all have their peculiar snares. Our nearest relations ofttimes betray us into sin ; thus Eve betrays Adam, Job's wife would have betrayed him, Lot's daughters betrayed him, and Peter would have betrayed Christ himself ; " Get thee behind me, Satan," Matt. xvi. 23. We have enemies without, and enemies within, and many snares are laid for our feet ; how warily then have we need to walk ; what care to have of our souls, when they are in such continual danger, and so many snares laid for our feet ; temptation without, and corruption within !

O my soul, hast thou so strong and potent an enemy to deal with, that seeks thy ruin, and makes it his business to undo thee. Oh what need then hast thou to stand upon thy guard. If thou

fall into his hands, nothing but the everlasting destruction of body and soul will satisfy him. Quit thyself therefore like a man, stand upon thy guard, "resist the devil, and he will flee from you," James iv. 7. None but those who throw down their weapon, and quit the field, are vanquished by him; though others may be foiled. Look to the main fort, the heart; if that be surprised, thou art undone; make a covenant with thy eyes, Job xxxi. 1; set a watch over thy mouth, that thou offend not with thy tongue, Psa. xxxix. 1; cxli. 3; "put on the whole armour of God," described in Eph. vi. 11—17; "the sword of the Spirit," and the darts of prayer are prevalent. Thou art to fight with "principalities and powers;" these contended with the angel, for Moses' body, but they contend with thee for thy precious soul. Stand fast, and thou wilt prevail; cry to thy Captain, Christ, for his assistance; so shalt thou be the victor; and if thou overcome, thou shalt reign with Christ.

O my God, be thou my defender; I have no strength against these potent enemies, neither know I what to do; only my eyes are up unto thee. O let no cruel beast devour and destroy my soul. Do thou watch over me, or I shall wake in vain; teach me the use of the Christian armour, rebuke the tempter, and chain him up, that he may not hurt me; keep me under the shadow of thy wings, hide me in the hollow of thy hand, and keep me out of the snares that are laid for my feet. Then shall I praise thee with an upright heart, and tell what God hath done for my soul.

XV.—UPON A MOLE SPOILING THE GARDEN.

WHEN I had fenced my garden, and secured it, as I thought, from the injury of all enemies, and began to grow secure and careless, as if out of the reach of danger; behold, an unseen and unexpected enemy! A despicable creature, comparatively speaking, was the occasion to me of no small trouble: a poor contemptible mole, ere I was aware, digged and rooted up my herbs and flowers, and spoiled the beauty of my work. And although I knew she could not be far distant, yet I knew not where to search for her; and for a considerable time was unable to take her prisoner, or punish her for the trespass.

This unexpected grievance made me consider the vanity of all human felicity, how soon the beauty of it may vanish and come to nothing, and by how small a means God can blast all earthly enjoyments. All that the world affords is of the nature of Jonah's gourd, which grew up in a night and perished in a night, Jonah iv. 6, 7. No solidity is to be found in sublunary creatures: some worm or other lies hid in every enjoyment, which eats out the very heart of it, and makes it wither and die; and when we have the greatest expectations, we meet with the greatest disappointments; when we think we are most secure, many times we are in most danger. I considered how foolish men were to promise

themselves security in their enjoyments, when they apprehend no danger in sight: for, if our ways please God, he can make our enemies, yea, the stones of the field, be at peace with us, Prov. xvi. 7; but, if we please not God, he can raise us enemies enough to disturb our peace. David was a good man; yet, on offending God, his own familiar friend Achitophel, nay, his own son Absalom, were allowed to seek his ruin. The meanest vermin are sometimes a scourge to the proudest tyrant: frogs, and lice, and flies, and locusts, make proud Pharaoh stoop to God, who before had proudly said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go," Exod. v. 2. But God made himself known to him by his judgments, and compelled him to say, "The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked," Exod. ix. 27. Yea, he has made caterpillars, canker-worms, palmerworms, and such like, which God calls his "great army," Joel ii. 25, a scourge to potent princes, and can destroy the greatest monarch on earth by these inferior insects. How little trust then should we put in earthly comforts, when God can so easily embitter them to us! and how dangerous is it, by our sins, to provoke God to leave us, and to punish us! He can easily do it; he need not raise many against us; no single creature, no fly, nor grass-blade, nor hair, but will be our bane, if it have a commission from God: instances of this might easily be given. Nay, if God withhold our breath, we return to our dust, and all our thoughts perish; and for our enjoyments, he can embitter that which we esteem our

sweetest comfort. If these earthly enjoyments, then, are vain and perishing, like their owners, what need have we to make preparation of something that is more durable and more certain, which may bear some proportion to our immortal souls. We can have no abiding city here, but affliction and vanity will attend us in all places: for if sin go before, affliction will follow after, as the effect follows the cause, or the shadow the substance. Mutable, however, as are our earthly enjoyments, and in continual danger, and having enemies without, within, above, beneath, and on every side; the soul is in much more danger, having more potent, subtle, cruel, and malicious enemies. How watchful then ought we to be, lest these chief jewels, our immortal souls, should be ruined or lost. What care, what providence should we use, that these be not made a prey! and what need have we to invoke God to be our Guardian, our Defender, and our Watchman!

O my soul, here is a check for thy folly, in that thou hast so over eagerly grasped after vanities, and sought content where it was not to be had: take heed to thyself, nothing earthly will supply thy need; a few days, and thou wilt be stripped of all. There are better pleasures, truer treasures to be had; there is a worm in these will eat out their very heart; there is vanity written upon them; they are but Egyptian reeds, and will break in thy hand; "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," Jer. xvii. 5; 1 John ii. 15. Use it we

may, but only as a traveller does his staff, which he keeps or throws away, according as it helps or hinders him in his journey. Worldly things are transitory, and vanity is inscribed upon them; but there are riches durable as the days of heaven, and which run parallel with the life of God, or the lines of eternity; these are worth striving for; they are laid up now, and may be drawn forth a thousand years hence. When others, therefore, lay hold upon riches, do thou lay hold upon eternal life, 1 Tim. vi. 12. Lay hold upon that pearl in the gospel; though thou lettest all things else go, this will make thee rich to God. The time is short, thy race is long; stand not still, nor leave thy way to catch trifles; up and be doing; let heaven be thy object, and earth will be thy disdain.

O my God, pardon my former folly; that I have spent so much time to so little purpose, and made no more haste to my journey's end; that I have lost my way, mistaken my happiness, and laboured so long in vain. Draw up my affections, O Lord, from earth to heaven, and let me be as zealous for heaven as ever I have been for earth, and take as much pains for my soul as ever I have done for my body.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18.

XVI.—UPON THE SPRINGING UP OF THE SEED.

WHEN I had digged the garden and sowed the seed, after a time I observed the springing of it up; and I then observed how fresh and fragrant that looked which a little before seemed dead and rotten among the clods. This reminded me of the mighty power of God, which could of a small seed, seemingly dead, and buried in the earth, raise up so flourishing an herb or flower, endowed with such beauty and excellent virtue; yea, so great, so mighty a tree. I considered how little I did or could contribute to them: I only disposed them where I would have them grow; but no skill, nor art, nor labour, nor industry of mine could make them grow. It is God alone must do the work, or it will not be done; it is he that gives to every seed his own body, and puts life into that which hath no life: all the skill, industry, and pains which the husbandman can use, cannot make one seed fructify, or one corn grow, if God succeed not his endeavours. Oh the madness, stupidity, and egregious folly of atheists, who deny a Deity, and yet cannot make a fly or worm, or the leaf of a tree, without pre-existent matter, nor put life into it when it is made, nor know how it is done! but the lives of many of them, are so debauched, that to still and quiet their enraged

conscience, they would fain obliterate this principle imprinted in the soul by God himself, namely, That there is a God, although that there is no God they rather *wish* than *believe*. But to return, it is God that does this work : “ The kingdom of Heaven is as if a man should cast seed into the ground ; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself ; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear,” Mark iv. 26—28. When we have done our duties, we must rely upon God for the success, and depend upon his providence ; if we cannot do it, leave it to him that can. Let us do our part of the work, and leave his part to him to do. We cannot do his, and he will not do ours : it is our part to plough, and sow, and manure, and till the ground out of which we were taken, Gen. ii. 15 ; but it is God who causes it to fructify and increase ; he giveth us “ rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness,” Acts xiv. 17. Diligence is our duty, as the blessing upon it is his gift. God placed no man upon the earth, as he did leviathan in the sea, only to play therein ; but we are to work, either with hand or head, and in the sweat of our brow or brain to eat our bread. But when we have done all, we must look higher for a blessing ; “ The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand,” Deut. xxviii. 12. The heavens are God’s store-houses,

which he opens for our profit, and causes them to pour out their influences upon the earth, and thereby he scatters his riches through the world. If we will fret and care about the event of things, when we have done our endeavour, no wonder if we faint under the burden ; if we take his part of the work upon us also, no wonder if we sink under it. Now, if his blessing be so necessary in temporals, much more necessary is it in spirituals, for none can make the soul fruitful but God. Do we not often see the seed which is sown by the same hand, and watered by the same word, thrive in one field, and not in another—in one heart; and not in another? Why? God causeth it to rain upon one field, and not upon another ; and the field it raineth not on, withers, Amos iv. 7. Of those who live under the same ministry, sit in the same seat, and enjoy the same culture, one remains barren, the other becomes fruitful. What is the cause? What, but the north wind, and the south wind ? the pleasant gales of the Spirit blow upon one garden, and not upon the other? Cant. iv. 16. When Christ was the preacher, that which worked upon Peter worked not upon Judas, not being made effectual by God.

The springing of the seed also put me in mind of the resurrection. The apostle, we find, illustrates that astonishing change by this similitude ; “ But some will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die : and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare

grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, to every seed his own body," 1 Cor. xv. 35—38. The rotting of the body is but as the rotting of the seed in the ground, that it may spring forth again with more vigour. If God can say to dead seed, Live; why can he not say so to our dead bodies? Is anything too hard for the Almighty? He that made them at the first of nothing, can we imagine he cannot gather again together our scattered ashes, and make of them again a body? Shall we think that to be impossible to God that seems hard to us? If he say, It shall be done, shall we conclude it cannot be done?

O my soul, use diligence, both in thy general and particular calling; but when thou hast done thy endeavour, leave the success to God, and neither anxiously care, nor doubtingly trouble thyself about the event. Disquiet not thyself at what thou canst not help, nor take his work in hand, lest thou be unable to finish it. Leave not thy work undone; for he will not do it: diligence is thy duty, yet promise not success to thy endeavours, but depend upon him for a blessing. If he give it, bless him for it, and let it more engage thy heart in his service: if he deny it, murmur not, but wisely search out what was the cause; some sin or other is pointed at in the suffering: if thou discover it, remove the Achan, and bless God for the providence; it is better to have a reformed heart, than a full barn. As it regards spiritual things, use diligence in the duties required but rest not in the work done: if a blessing

succeed, let the Lord have his homage paid : if, some obstruction appear to hinder the work rest not till it be removed : if thou meet God in his ordinance, bless his name for it : if he absent himself, let no duty please thee ; rest not till thou hast recovered sight of him. As for the resurrection, call not that in question which is so clearly held forth in his word ; heaven and earth shall pass, but his word shall not pass, till it be fulfilled, Matt. xxiv. 35. What is too hard for an Omnipotent arm ? He that made all things of nothing, and every year raises a crop from dead seed, why should we think it impossible for him to gather together our ashes, however scattered, and raise again our dead bodies to life ? It is thy great concern to live holily, that thou mayest die happily, and live with God eternally.

O my God, enable me to commit all my concerns for soul and for body to thee ; and let me not murmur under any dark dispensation of providence. However thou deal with me in reference to the body, or these worldly enjoyments, yet deal well with me in reference to my soul, and in reference to eternity ; let the seed of grace grow and flourish, let the weeds of sin be rooted out, and let my soul, like the good ground, bring forth an hundred-fold ; then shall I glorify thee when I bring forth much fruit.

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die, John xi. 25, 26.

XVII.—UPON A SUDDEN DROUGHT.

WHEN I had digged, manured, sown, and fenced my garden, and done all that I could do, and began, from the hopeful springing up of the seed, to have comfortable hopes of a plentiful increase, and to rejoice in the works of my hands; behold, an unexpected judgment fell upon it: for God restrained the influence of heaven, and caused that it should not rain upon the earth; and the clouds which were wont to drop fatness, and by which God was used to open his treasure, and to give a blessing to his people, Deut. xxviii. 12, now proved empty clouds, promising much, but paying nothing. Hereupon the earth languished, and could not nourish what she had produced; so that herbs and flowers, yea, the grass of the field, languished, hung their heads, withered, and died, and their beauty faded away. This providence made me consider how vain and fruitless all our endeavours are, either for this life or that to come, if God succeed them not with his blessing; and that all the men who ever lived upon the face of the earth, had they joined with their united counsels, with policy and power, could not have removed this judgment, not even if they had prayed to all the gods of the heathens to assist them: Can any of the vanities of the Gentiles give rain? Jer. xiv. 22. It is in vain to

hope for salvation from the hills, or from the mountains ; " in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel," Jer. iii. 23. When God blows upon our creature comforts, they vanish and prove unsatisfying ; " Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little ; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Ye have sown much, and bring in little ; ye eat, but ye have not enough ; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink ; ye clothe you, but there is none warm ; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes," Hag. i. 6, 9. The earth cannot bring forth without the influences of heaven, and these cannot be had without a commission from God ; " Can the heavens give showers ? art not thou he, O Lord our God ? therefore we will wait upon thee : for thou hast made all these things," Jer. xiv. 22. It is he that clotheth the heavens with blackness, Isa. i. 3. " I will hear the heavens," God is represented as saying, " and they shall hear the earth ; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil ; and they shall hear Jezreel," Hos. ii. 21, 22. But when God refuseth to hear, all others cry in vain ; they may all say, as the king of Israel to the woman that cried to him, " If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee ? out of the barn-floor, or out of the wine-press ?" 2 Kings vi. 27. Yet how does vain man miscalculate, and promise himself a plentiful increase, and much happiness in the enjoyment of it, like the fool in the gospel, Luke xii. 16—20, when the event oftentimes proves otherwise. Even if their design succeed, as some-

times it does, (for all things fall alike to all, as to the good so to the bad, Eccl. ix. 2 ; the sun shines upon the just and the unjust,) they give not the glory to God, but sacrifice to their own nets, and burn incense to their drags, Hab. i. 16 ; they think their own arm saveth them, and their own wisdom and endeavours enriches them. They are like the king of Assyria, who said, " By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom ; for I am prudent," Isa. x. 13. But what had all my labour profited me, or what good would theirs have done them, if God had not given rain ?

I went yet further in my consideration of the great mercy and benefit of water, without which it were impossible that man or beast, fish or fowl, herb or plant, or any other creature sensitive or vegetable, should live or prosper ; and wondered at my own and others stupidity, that we took so little notice of the mercy, and gave God so little thanks for it. This mercy was more prized in former times—by Israel in the wilderness, by Jacob, yea, by Ahab ; " And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks : peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive. So they divided the land between them," 1 Kings xviii. 5, 6.

When I had a while considered these things, I raised my meditation a little higher, and considered, If rain were so refreshing to the thirsty earth, and so necessary for the fruits thereof, what was the dew of heaven to the poor soul ! Without it all the ordinances would prove of little

use, and all the sowing, planting, and manuring, would signify little : the soul, under those enjoyments, would be like the heath of the desert, that sees not when good comes, Jer. xvii. 6. What cause then have we to depend upon God for the one and for the other.

O my soul, are thy endeavours crossed, and thy labour lost ? Learn to depend upon God for the time to come ; concern not thyself overmuch in the world. If it smile upon thee, let it not steal away thy affection : if it frown on thee, be not troubled at it ; for these things are at the disposal of thy Father, and he minds thy good. Use diligence and providence, because they are commanded duties ; but beware of murmuring and repining, because they are forbidden sins. When thou hast gone as far as thou canst, leave the success to God, and whatever the issue be, acquiesce in his will. If thy endeavours be blasted, think it was best they should be so, because God thought thus ; if he succeed them, bless him ; if he cross them, bless him also ; "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," saith Job ; "blessed be the name of the Lord," Job i. 21. Seek not great things in the world ; expect no more than God hath promised, lest if they fall short of expectation, thou be discouraged. Hast thou neither poverty nor riches, but food convenient ; this was Agur's petition, Prov. xxx. 8. Hast thou food and raiment ? the apostle was therewith content, 1 Tim. vi. 8. On the other hand, in respect to the soul, thou must not take up with a small portion, but labour after the highest pitch of godliness, and be as covetous

for grace as others are for gold ; use the means diligently, but trust not to the means. Though Paul and Apollos may plant and water, it is God gives the increase : he only can speak to the heart, and say to thy sins, Die ; and to thy soul, Live.

O my God, forgive, I beseech thee, my carnal confidence, and trusting to an arm of flesh, both in reference to my body and soul ; let me see the vanity of all creature confidences, how little they can avail without thy blessing ; and however thou crossest my designs for the world, Lord, succeed my designs for heaven with thy blessing. Leave me not to the teaching of man, but teach me thyself ; water me with the dew of heaven, and let thy clouds drop fatness ; “ incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness,” Psa. cxix. 36.

Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers—until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest, Isa. xxxii. 13, 15.

I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground : I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring : and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses, Isa. xliv. 3, 4.

I have planted, Apollos watered ; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth ; but God that giveth the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7.

XVIII.—ON THE TWOFOLD WANTS OF A GARDEN.

WHEN I considered the constant dependence of a garden, both on Divine and human care, so that they would equally err who should trust in their own cultivation of it, without seeking the influences of the heavens; and those who, in reliance on those influences, should neglect its culture:—this recalled my thoughts to spiritual husbandry, and the means of grace. It put me in mind of a twofold error in men, one in the excess, the other in the defect: some draw at the pipe, and neglect the fountain; the others thinking to be supplied immediately by the fountain, neglect the pipe: some trust in the ordinances, and think them sufficient, and idolize the minister, who yet can give no more than he receives from the fountain; the others think themselves above ordinances, and neglect them, the ordinary way appointed by God for their supply; and these oftentimes argue themselves out of their religion. Though the breast be not that which feeds the child, yet the child must draw milk from the breast, or otherwise is not likely to have it: though the pipe cannot supply the water, it is the usual means of bringing it. Thus the ministry of the word is usually honoured with the conversion of souls, though God can, and no doubt sometimes does work conversion without it. Cornelius, we

find, was directed by an angel to Peter. Though the angel certified him, that his alms and his prayers were accepted, Acts x. 4; yet he read not to him the doctrine of redemption, though no doubt he could better have done it than Peter, had God given him^o a commission: but the office of preaching is given to men, not to angels. When Paul was struck down in the way, as he journeyed towards Damascus, Christ did not teach him himself, but sent him to Ananias, Acts ix.; thereby honouring his own ordinance. So Philip, by the Spirit of God, was sent to instruct the eunuch, Acts viii. 29. Now either Christ himself immediately, or the angel, or the Holy Spirit, might have done the work, and would, had not God intended to have honoured his messengers with the work of man's conversion, and also to leave the gospel ministry as a standing ordinance, for the bringing in and building up those who shall be saved. It is therefore not safe to contemn the means.

O my soul, fall not out with the pipe, for this is the appointed way to bring water from the fountain; fall not in love with it, for of itself it can give no satisfaction; use it thou must, but idolize it thou must not; trust not in men nor means, food nor physic, though thou must make use of them; "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord," Jer. xvii. 5. All other are physicians of no value; clouds without water, "broken cisterns that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 13. It was Asa's failing, and no doubt a gross one, to seek to the physicians in the

neglect of God. Think it not sufficient for the body to make use of the ablest physician, nor for the soul to live under the ablest minister, for many bodies and souls perish under such : if God help thee not, whence shall they help thee ? The sun, in a clear day, may be seen in a pail of water ; but if it be clouded, all the water in the world cannot show it. The ordinance is the usual place where God may be seen ; but, till God open men's eyes, no one can see him there. Yet must not the ordinances be despised ; for usually God makes discoveries of himself there. He could have fed Elijah himself, or by an angel, yet he sends him food by a raven ; he could have taught Paul as well as struck him down, yet he sends him to Ananias ; he seldom works otherwise where the means of grace is to be had ; he could have healed Hezekiah with a word, yet useth a bunch of figs. No matter what is the disease, or what is the receipt, if God bless it.

O my God, afford me the means of grace, the ministry of thy word, and visit me not with a famine of thy word, nor leave me to the teaching of man, but follow home every truth, and set it home by thy Holy Spirit ; let me not draw at an empty pipe, but from a full fountain : then shall I be fat and flourishing.

We are labourers together with God, 1 Cor. iii. 9.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us, 2 Cor. iv. 7.

XIX.—UPON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE VARIOUS SORTS OF FLOWERS AND VEGETABLES.

WHEN I considered the various forms, features, colours, and virtues of the several sorts of herbs, flowers, and other vegetables ; and that though there are perhaps many species in the world, yet every species has a distinct colour, shape, and virtue different from the rest ; it came to my mind how many thousand millions of faces are upon the face of the earth, all alike, and yet unlike ; all resembling one another, and yet scarcely two persons to be found out in the whole world, so like, but they may be distinguished in some respects by a discerning eye. And as they differ in bodily shape, so also in the endowments of the mind : scarce two can be found in an age, alike qualified in mental gifts. God does not intrust any one man with all, neither is there any that has not some talent. “ Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom ; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit ; to another faith by the same Spirit ; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit ; to another the working of miracles ; to another prophecy ; to another discerning of spirits ; to another divers kinds of tongues ; to another the interpretation

of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will," 1 Cor. xii. 4—11. And to one is given ten talents, to another five, and to another one, according to the place and employment each is set in, and the work God requires at their hands. And as the divers smell of flowers comes from the same influence, and the divers sounds in the organ from the same breath, so these divers operations from one Spirit, and all for the good of the whole. He that is not fit to serve the body is not fit to be of the body. God gives to every man according to his place and station, and will require an account of what he gives. Some are deeply skilled in the original tongues, and other languages: others excel in philosophical pursuits and inquiries; they search nature's garden from end to end, and become excellent artists there: others again are eminent in the practical sciences, in the law, or in medicine, or divinity, or geometry, while others are noted for ingenious inventions, etc. Thus, among Christians too, some excel in one grace, and some in another; some are deep in humiliation, some have a great measure of self-denial, some excel in faith, some in patience, etc. Among ministers, each has his peculiar gift; some are good textuaries, and some critics; some are skilled in casuistry, some in controversies; some are best at explication, and some at application; some are fitted for conviction, and others for comforting afflicted consciences; and all for the common good. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors

and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," Eph. iv. 11, 12.

O my soul, hast thou any one of these gifts? Has God lent thee any talent; why hast thou not improved it? How comes it to pass in all this time that thou hast not increased it? God will require it at thy hand ere long; and it is a wonder it has not been taken away ere now. Hadst thou been diligent, thou mightest, as others, with the good servant have said, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds," Luke xix. 16; when, alas! it is to be feared, thou canst not say, it has gained two. Though God will not blame thee that thou hast received no more, yet will he blame thee for improving that no better. The time is coming God will call his servants to an account, as well as his enemies, and reckon with them. Take heed of receiving any grace in vain, nor envy those that have received more; perhaps they received at first no more, but have better employed what they had. Let this put thee on to diligence, not to murmuring; covet grace rather than gifts, and to pray fervently, rather than rhetorically; stammering Moses shall be heard as soon as eloquent Aaron. The Lord often takes away his talents from some, and gives them to others that will better improve them: he lays aside the slothful as broken vessels, and ere long they become as dead men out of mind, whilst the diligent are had in everlasting remembrance.

O my God, lay not to my charge my former folly, my sloth and negligence; take not away

thy talent from me, but give me a heart better to improve it. Let me double my diligence, and amend my pace, that thou mayest never say to me, as to that unfaithful and unprofitable servant, " Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matt. xxv. 30.

Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace, John i. 16.

Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness, Rom. xii. 6—8.

Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, Eph. iv. 7.

In him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, Col. ii. 9, 10.

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God: if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.

XX.—UPON WITHERING HERBS AND FLOWERS.

UPON the sight of some herbs and flowers withered, which a little before were fresh and flourishing, and made a beautiful show in the hand and bosom ; I began to consider—Thus it is with many of the professors of our age ; many who have made a fair show, and held out a large profession in the sight of the sun, are already dead and withered, and many more begin to hang the head, and all for want of root : the sun of persecution shining upon them has killed many ; and if it should rise higher, many more would wither. They had a name to live, says the Redeemer, but they were dead, Rev. iii. 1. God knows his own sheep, and of those given to Christ he will not lose one. But these, saith the apostle, are gone from among us, because “they were not of us,” 1 John ii. 19. They, with the Jews, cry, “The temple of the Lord,” Jer. vii. 4, when they regard not the Lord of the temple ; they were never better than meteors, and so they end ; they are constant in nothing but inconstancy ; like empty clouds, they promise refreshing showers, but yield none. Perhaps with Demas, these men choose the world before Christ ; yea, perhaps, with Judas, they will betray him for money. And why is all this ? but because they received not the truth in the love of it, 2 Thess. ii. 10.

When they turned professors, they took not Christ's counsel, to sit down first and reckon the charges; and therefore, like the foolish builder, began to lay the foundation, and were not able to finish; they took up religion upon trust, and considered not what it would cost them, or what God required at their hands: in consequence, when reproaches or crosses come, they soon give it up, and will not be of so expensive a profession. Some take it up for wrong ends, and intend it but as a cloak to cover their designs, and when the design is brought about, or they disappointed, the cloak is cast aside as useless. Many pursue some *carnal* design under such a disguise, and use religion as a workman does his tools: as long as one will serve, he uses it; and when it will not, he lays by that, and takes another. If persecution will fit the design better than profession, he takes up that. It is no strange thing to see men persecute what they have professed. Those that follow Christ for loaves, not for love, will cry "Hosanna," to-day; and "Crucify," to-morrow. They are resolved rather to wrong their consciences, than that their consciences should wrong them.

O my soul, do so many flowers fade, and does so much corn wither for want of root? Are so many cedars blown down by the wind, and do so many forward professors turn apostates at the apprehension of danger? Look to thyself, "make straight paths for thy feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way," Heb. xii. 13. Take heed, lest if the sun of persecution arise, thou also be offended and wither, for want of root.

Rest not therefore till thou canst say with Job, "The root of the matter is found in me," Job xix. 28. Let thy ends and motives be sound, or otherwise thy profession will prove worthless. Expect sufferings, and prepare to bear them, or else never set up thy trade of Christianity. If heaven be not worth having at the greatest rate, and Christ at the dearest price, never meddle with these commodities: if they are, break not for price; the pearl in the gospel is worth all that thou hast. If religion be not good, never profess it; if it be, never forsake it; sit down first and reckon the charges with the wise builder, and whatsoever thou canst find others have paid for it, expect the like may be required of thee. And if upon these terms the bargain will not suit thy taste, meddle not with it. Thou mayest read, Jeremiah was in derision daily, every one mocked him; David was the drunkard's song; the very abjects derided Job; the apostles were made the off-scouring of all things. Some, for their religion's sake were forsaken by their friends, as Christ by his brethren; this may be thy condition. Some have lost their estates, and been exposed to hardship; and who knows but that it may be required of thee? Canst thou break through these difficulties? If not, never set a step further in profession; if heaven will not make thee amends for earth, and God for the creature, and eternal life for the loss of temporal life.

O my God, without thy support, I shall never be able to hold out; but through thee I can do all things. I know there is more excellency in

thee than the world can afford ; and if I lose my God, my soul, my heaven, and happiness, to preserve my estate, my life or liberty, it will be a ~~18~~ing bargain. These things I can want, Christ I cannot want. Lord, give me him, though upon the hardest terms ; let me have strong apprehensions of my love to thee, and thine to me. Then shall I never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Let not the glory of the world so dazzle my sight that I cannot behold thee in glory.

Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth : and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth : and when the sun was up, they were scorched ; and because they had no root, they withered away.—He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it ; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while : for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended, Matt. xiii. 5, 6, 20, 21.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches : He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered ; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned, John xv. 4—6.

XXI.—UPON THE SPRINGING OF HERBS
AFTER WINTER.

AFTER a sharp winter, when the spring approached, and the sun began to look more cheerfully upon the earth, and to shine upon it with a more direct ray, I observed that the herbs and flowers which before seemed dead and withered, began now to germinate and bud, and to spring forth, and to look lively, lovely, and amiable ; the grass waxed green, and the face of the earth was changed from what it was a few weeks ago ; trees resumed their foliage, and all seemed to rejoice at the sun's approach, and to answer the springing showers which kindly fell upon them. Even those flowers that just before hid their heads, and were buried in the earth, now crept out of their cells, and in their kind returned praise to their great Benefactor ; and the winter, which seemed to have killed them, did but prepare them for their future increase. This made me consider, If it be thus with vegetables, surely it should be so with the soul, when it comes from under the clouds of affliction, and when the sun of righteousness ariseth with healing in his wings. This made me consider my own condition, whether I had answered the pains and cost which God had bestowed upon me, whether my affliction which God had laid upon me, the sharp winter

that I had undergone, and the sharp showers I had felt, had wrought such an effect upon me, as the winter and the influences of heaven had done upon these vegetables, namely, made my graces germinate and bloom, and bring forth fruit; for I saw wherever life is in the root, it will show forth itself in the branches.

O my soul, thou hast had a long and sharp winter; what effect has it wrought in thee? Thou hast lain in the furnace of affliction; is thy dross consumed, or is it not? Thou hast been, under pining sickness, brought to the gates of death; yet hath God said to thee, Live. Thou hast been threatened with pinching wants, yet more alarmed than injured; and when stripped of all, God let thee see, that he could make provision, and could furnish a table in the wilderness: "the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail," 1 Kings xvii. 16. God blessed a little, and it sufficed. When thou wast driven from friends and relations, he raised thee up friends more true than many of thy relations, and in due time he said to thee, as sometime to Jacob, "Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee," Gen. xxxii. 9. Sometimes thou hast been under a cloud, and then again the cloud has been scattered, and the sun has broken out again: many have been the dispensations of providence thou hast been under. O my soul, how dost thou answer God's expectations in these providences? Affliction springs not out of the dust, neither does trouble rise out of the ground; is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it? Job v. 6; Amos

iii. 6. Whoever is the instrument, God has a hand in the work ; whoever be the rod, it is he that lays it on. It has a voice, and we should hear it; an end, and that is thy reformation. Dost thou answer his end ? The winter now is past, and the singing of birds is come ; the earth, and all things therin, look lovely ; and each vegetable in which life is, discovers it. Is it only winter with thee ; and does no fruit appear ? If so, God justly may say to thee, as of the fruitless fig-tree, " Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever," Matt. xxi. 19. If all his ploughing, sowing, and manuring, prove in vain, he will say of thee, as sometimes of his vineyard, " What could I have done more for him than I have done ? wherefore then, when I expected fruit, doth he bring forth wild grapes ? Many a time the sun has shone with a favourable aspect upon thee, and many a time the dew of heaven has been showered down ; many a faithful, skilful husbandman has been sent to dress thee and manure thee ; and must Christ, when he seeks fruit, still meet with disappointments ?" Art thou so hard and rocky, that no furnace will melt thee, nor hammer break thee, or bring thee into form meet for his building ? O my God, this is my condition by nature, but thou canst change my nature ; thou hast a furnace that will melt me, and bring me into any form ; thou hast a hammer that can break me, and fit me for thy work ; thou canst soften me, and make me pliable ; thou canst take away the stony heart, and give me a heart of flesh. Lord, is it not thy promise ? Make it good to me ; blow upon my

soul, and the graces of thy Spirit will bud and break forth ; speak the word, and my soul shall live. Lord, teach me thyself, and leave me not to the teaching of man ; thou canst reach the heart, whilst man speaks only to the ear.

Before I was afflicted I went astray : but now have I kept thy word.—It is good for me that I have been afflicted ; that I might learn thy statutes, Psa. cxix. 67, 71.

I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus ; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke : turn thou me, and I shall be turned ; for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented ; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh : I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons ; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ?—Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby, Heb. xii. 6, 7, 11.

XXII.—UPON A WITHERING CLUSTER OF HERBS.

WHEN I beheld a cluster of herbs in the garden in a decaying, withering condition,—some part dead, others languishing, and but few alive and flourishing,—I left off weeding, dressing, cutting, and manuring the greater number, as they were never likely to answer my pains, or recompense my labour. But considering there were some living, which were likely to be choked with weeds if let alone and disregarded, I transplanted them into a better soil, leaving the dead ones to themselves, for the fire, or any other use. I considered then how empty and unseemly the place was, when the living herbs were removed; what a confused and worthless plot of ground it was, of no profit, pleasure, or benefit.

The thought of this reminded me that as I had dealt with these withering herbs and flowers, so God oftentimes does by a withering church. Some of its members he takes into his bosom; others he transplants into a better place, and then roots up the rest, or reserves them for judgment. Thus he preserved Noah for another plot, which he was about to make when he destroyed the old world, which before was his garden, when the plants were almost dead. He removed Lot into another soil, when he rooted up his garden in Sodom; he would not fence a

place for so few living herbs, but laid it waste, and burned it up. He transplanted Abraham from the place of his nativity ; and found room by m. providence for Isaac and Jacob, whose posterity he transplanted into Egypt, where for a long time they thrived and prospered ; till, in the end, overrun with weeds, briars, and thorns, he transplanted Israel into Canaan, and cast the Egyptians, those dead and worthless plants, those weeds and thorns, into the Red Sea. And since that time he has laid waste many gardens, when they withered and decayed, which formerly did flourish. Witness the famous seven churches of Asia, mentioned in Revelation ii. and iii. I considered—That when God removes his own plants, either into his bosom or elsewhere, it is time for professors to look about them. “The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart : and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come,” Isa. lvii. 1. When God’s jewels are removed, his care of that place is over. When his flowers are gone, he will pluck up his hedge, and throw down his wall, and let it be eaten up and trodden down ; he will lay it waste ; it shall not be pruned nor digged ; and there shall come up briars and thorns ; and he will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it, Isa. v. 5, 6. And how dreary does that place look which is thus left and forsaken by God ! This consideration made me think, It is time for those in England to look about them ; gray hairs are here and there upon us, yet we consider it not, Hos. vii. 9. We may see many a

withering branch and dying Christian amongst us, that formerly seemed flourishing.

O my soul, art not thou one of these dead, or at least withering plants? Art thou fallen from thy first love? Where is “the love of thine espousals?” Jer. ii. 2; the affections and the zeal manifested in thy younger years? Has thy age increased thy wisdom? and art thou growing more strange with thy God, and more luke-warm in his service; and showing less care of thy soul, and taking less pains for heaven? Time was, when thou wast more fresh and flourishing, and more like to a green bay-tree; but now thou growest old and dry, and little sap and vigour appears. Is this the fruit of all the pains God hath bestowed upon thee? Is it to make thee more dry and barren? The trees of righteousness, planted by the rivers of water, should never want fruit nor leaf; yea, should “bring forth fruit in old age,” Psa. xcii. 14. Yea, thy fruit in age may be expected to be more, and mellower, ripened by age and a more mature judgment. Thou hast borne the burden and heat of the day, and wilt thou now quit the vineyard, or cease or slacken thy work, when thou shouldst come and receive thy wages? If thou turn back, God will have no pleasure in thee; if thou put thy hand to the plough, and look back, thou art not fit for the kingdom of heaven, Heb. x. 38; Luke ix. 62; neither will thy righteousness be remembered. Wilt thou lose all the pains that ever thou hast taken in heaven’s way, and at last remit thy zeal when thou shouldst double thy diligence? Is it not he

that holds out to the end that shali be saved ? Matt. xxiv. 13. Didst thou ever yet repent of any pains thou didst take for heaven ; and dost thou think thou shalt ever have cause to repent hereafter ? Art thou afraid thy reward will be too great ; or thy crown of glory too heavy ; or that God will love thee too well ; or that thou shalt make heaven too sure ? If not, why dost thou slacken thy pace ? Dost thou expect a better master, or better work, or better wages ? If not, beware of negligence, lest thou force God to put thee out of his service.

O my God, keep my heart upright in thy service, and direct my steps that I turn not aside. Keep me from the rage of Satan, that I be not captivated by him ; he seeks my soul to undo it, and fain would make me lose my reward. Lord, make me faithful to the death, and then give me a crown of life, Rev. ii. 10.

Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt : thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.—Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her ? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts : look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine.—Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine ; and we shall be saved, Psa. lxxx. 8, 9, 12—14, 19.

XXIII.—UPON THE UNKNOWN VIRTUES OF MANY
VEGETABLES.

WHEN, upon the strictest search and scrutiny that I could possibly make, I could not find out the natures, properties, virtues, and uses of several vegetables, and other herbs; nor indeed the full use, virtue, and benefit of any one of them: and I suppose I have cause to think, that the greatest naturalist cannot do it; nay, if all the most skilful men should join heart and hand in the work, and combine themselves together, and use their utmost diligence, yet would they fall short of making a perfect discovery of it, though I know every age makes some further progress in it than the preceding did:—This made me admire the wisdom of the Creator, who has made nothing in vain, and hath put such admirable virtues into such desppicable weeds, that did we know their worth, we should prize many at a high rate which now we despise. And if we cannot find out the virtues and operation of those things which we are every day conversant with, no wonder if we are greatly ignorant of God, of the Trinity, and those more abstruse points of religion, which are more remote from our senses, and above our capacity. He that cannot attain to know the nature of his own soul, no wonder if he be ignorant of the Divine nature.

O my soul, are there secrets in nature that thou understandest not? yea, even in those creatures that thou dost daily converse with? admire the wisdom of the Creator, and wonder not that there are mysteries in spirituals beyond thy conceiving. If thou canst not understand material objects, much less those that are "spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14; the nature of God, of angels, and of thyself, lie far more remote from thy understanding. There is many a man who can search nature's garden from end to end, who never could search his own heart; many can try their evidence for lands, that know not how to try their title to heaven: they can find out the state of their bodies, but know not the state of their souls. But when others study earth, do thou study heaven; the things that are necessary are attainable. Study Christ, and him crucified; this will do thee more good than if thou couldst, with Solomon, discourse of all the vegetables, from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop that groweth upon the wall. And did men study God and themselves as much as they did the creature, it would bring in more profit. The knowledge of these things is good, but the knowledge of God, and ourselves is necessary: all thy time is little enough for this study; the other may be left to more curious intellects.

O my God, suffer me not to spend my time in any unnecessary study, that should be spent in seeking thee: let me not catch at the shadow, and lose the substance; and hunt so long after curiosities, that I lose myself, and know not which way to return. All my time is little enough

to spend in my general and particular calling. Let my greatest care be to know God and myself, the duty I owe him, and the relation I stand in to him ; and what interest I have in Jesus Christ. Lord, let this be the work of the remaining part of my life.

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God : but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever; that we may do all the words of the law, Deut. xxix. 29.

Canst thou by searching find out God ? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ? It is as high as heaven ; what canst thou do ? deeper than hell ; what canst thou know ? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea, Job xi. 7—9.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom : and the knowledge of the holy is understanding, Prov. ix. 10.

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates ? 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! For who hath known the mind of the Lord ? or who hath been his counsellor ? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again ? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things : to whom be glory for ever. Amen. Rom. xi. 33—36.

XXIV.—UPON SOME DESPISED, YET USEFUL
WEEDS.

WHEN I saw some productions which are deemed weeds, and usually grow in the fields without labour, pains, or care of man ; or are thrown out of the garden with contempt, as not being either sweet for savour, or beautiful to the eye ;—when I beheld these very weeds gathered, and successfully used, by some of the greatest masters in medicine, for the curing of great distempers ; when the more glorious, gorgeous, and more esteemed vegetables were disregarded :—This made me consider, how deceitful a thing it is to judge by the outward appearance, and that beauty and virtue are not always linked together, neither go they hand in hand. Many have been deceived when they have pleased their eyes by beauty. Samuel, that man of God, was deceived by his eye, when he thought Eliab, David's elder brother, was to be the Lord's anointed, because he had a good outward appearance ; “ And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before him. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature ; because I have refused him : for the Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart,” 1 Sam. xvi. 6, 7. Many a man under a homely

garb carries more real worth, more true gentility, yea, nobility, than others do under their silks and velvets. Yet there was a disease amongst Christians in the apostles' time, and it is almost epidemical in our days, to respect the clothes or outward ornaments of a man more than his dispositions and qualifications : “ If there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment ; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place ; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool : are ye not then partial in yourselves ? ” Whatever disrespect man may discover for the lowly, “ God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom,” James ii. 2—5. A poor man, though wise, yea, though by his wisdom he saved the city, yet is not remembered, Eccl. ix. 15. Many wise ministers are heard with scorn, or at least with disregard, till men lie upon their death-bed ; and then they are sent unto for counsel, or rather comfort. It is not, however, always those that can speak most eloquently that speak best : he is the best preacher that woos for Christ and not for himself, and would set the crown upon his Lord’s head, and not his own. It is not the tickling of the fancy a preacher should so much mind, as to speak convincingly to the conscience.

O my soul, judge not by the outward but the inward qualification, neither cover hypocrisy by a mask of seeming sincerity, for God will, ere long, pluck off such vizors. Slight no man merely

upon account of his poverty, for God thinks never the worse of him for it ; admire no man merely for his riches, for God thinks never the better of him for them : this would be to worship a golden calf. The time is coming, that the king must leave his robes behind him, and the beggar his rags ; and the inward qualifications alone must distinguish between the one and the other. Dives and Lazarus, when they come to stand on even ground, shall by these be tried ; and so must all, by what means or titles soever they have been dignified, distinguished, or called. Our works and worth, not our wealth, will follow us. Wherever thou seest Christ in any, own him ; for God will own him. Esteem grace in the soul more than gold in the purse, and the robes of righteousness above the most costly jewels. For thy counsellors take the wisest, not the wealthiest. Esteem that preacher best who speaks home to the heart and conscience ; not him who seeks to please the fancy. Esteem that sermon best where thou findest most of Christ ; and not that which is dressed with rhetorical flourishes, which serve to darken and not illustrate the matter.

O my God, should I cover my profaneness or hypocrisy with the vizor of seeming holiness, thou wilt soon discover it, and unmask me ; for thou searchest the heart, and triest the reins, and all things are open and apparent to thee. Lord, give me sincerity and truth in the inward part, for this is thy gift ; make me such as thy own soul delights in ; let me not be deceived by my own deceitful heart, nor think to deceive others, for I cannot deceive thy all-seeing eye.

XXV.—UPON THE SYMPATHY AND ANTIPATHY
OF DIFFERENT VEGETABLES.

I CONSIDERED the sympathy and antipathy which may be observed to subsist between different vegetables, for which no reason can be given, and which is such that some will rather die than grow in the neighbourhood of others; whilst others never thrive well, except so planted; and the like antipathy we may observe among sensitive creatures, where one kind seeks the destruction of another, and others discover mutual love and delight; nay, something of this may be seen where is neither life nor sense, as in the strange sympathy between the loadstone and the iron, etc. This consideration reminded me of the strange antipathy between the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman, mentioned in Gen. iii. 15, “ I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed.” In wicked men there is so perfect a hatred to God, that they will, if they can possibly, erase the very image of God, wherever they see it. They hate every thing that God loves, and love every thing that he hates; they hate every thing that is like him, and that for this very reason, because it is like him. Now, no reason can be given for this, why they should hate this God, who is goodness itself, who is also their Creator, and their great Benefactor, from whom they have their life, and breath, and being, their

food and raiment, their limbs and senses, their health and strength, their peace and plenty ; without whom they cannot speak, or stir, or live a moment. And yet this is the case of all wicked men on earth, however contrary to each other in their principles, and their dispositions : if they agree in nothing else, yet they agree in this, —to oppose the power of godliness. Herod and Pilate can both consent that innocent Christ shall be put to death. Let a godly man be of ever so pleasing a disposition, and ever so engaging a behaviour, ever so open-hearted and open-handed, yet this one ingredient, holiness, spoils all in the world's account, and renders him hateful and contemptible in their eyes. Though never man spake like Christ, and no guile was found in his mouth, John vii. 46 ; 1 Pet. ii. 22 ; yet a seditious murderer, Barabbas, was preferred before him. Oh the degenerate estate of poor man ! whither art thou fallen ! Is the chief good become the object of thy chief hatred ? and is holiness, wherein thou wast created, and which is God's image, without which thou canst never be saved, become thy scorn, and more contemptible than the image of the devil ? Is the devil become the better master ; and is his work the better work ; and will also his wages be the better wages ? Well, the time is coming when thy judgment will be altered, and thou wilt be glad to revoke those words which now thou speakest against the power of godliness.

The sympathy, also, which is amongst the children of God was called to mind : they are

sons of the same Father, and heirs of the same inheritance ; and therefore should be “ kindly affectioned one to another,” Rom. xii. 10. They are brethren in Adam according to the flesh, and brethren in Christ according to the Spirit ; they “ rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep,” Rom. xii. 15. This is that brotherly love in which the apostle bids us continue, Heb. xiii. 1. Communion with God, and the communion of saints is heaven upon earth. Believers are members of the mystical body of Christ : and it is with believers, as with members in the natural body, they have the same care one for another ; if one suffer, all suffer ; and if one be honoured, all rejoice, 1 Cor. xiii. 25, 26 ; they are like lyre strings, if one be struck, all the rest sound ; and still more clear would this sympathy be, if it were not for the remaining corruption that is in us.

O my soul, dost thou meet with hardship in the world ; wonder not at it, thou art in an enemy’s country ; the world will love her own, but never loved Christ, nor any of his : the Seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, did never yet agree. Christ hath told thee, “ In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world,” John xvi. 33. The godly and the wicked fight under two captains ; the one under the banner of Christ, the other under the standard of Satan ; and therefore there is no hope of reconciliation : fire and water are not more contrary than Christ and Belial. O my soul, manifest thyself to be the seed of the woman, not by making peace, but by maintaining war with Christ’s enemies, and by sympathizing with

his children; mourn with those that mourn, and rejoice with those that rejoice, Rom. xii. 10—15: like the members of the same body, when one is distempered, the other suffers; when one stands in need, all the rest yield their help and assistance.

O my God, is there such an antipathy in the hearts of wicked men, against thine image in the hearts of thy people? What cause have we to admire thy patience which suffers such enemies to live upon the face of the earth, and feedest, and maintainest them at thy own cost and charge! What cause have I to wonder that thou didst bear with me so long, when I was in that relation. And what cause have we to admire thy wisdom and power in preserving a handful of thy people, like lambs in the midst of numerous wolves, which seek their destruction; when, for ought we know, there are hundreds to one against them, that vow their destruction! Lord, let me manifest myself to be thine, by my antipathy to sin and the works of darkness, and by my sympathy with the children of light.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you, John xv. 19.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another, 1 John iv. 9—11.

XXVI.—UPON A ROSE AMONG THORNS.

WHEN I beheld and considered how the rose grew and flourished, and came to perfection amongst the thorns and prickles that surrounded it, and was not hurt, but rather defended by them, and preserved from its other enemies; I thought it represented the church here in the world. For as here, there are a thousand prickles for one rose, and yet this rose is preserved; so in the world, it may probably be conjectured, there are a thousand wicked men (who are compared to thorns) for one that is godly. The church, in her militant condition, while she is in the world, is compared to the lily among the thorns; “As the lily among thorns,” saith Christ, “so is my love among the daughters,” Cant. ii. 2. The wicked are indeed to the believer what the Canaanites were to the children of Israel; pricks in the eyes, and thorns in the sides, Numb. xxxiii. 55; “the best of them is a brier: and the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge,” Micah vii. 4; yet are they not altogether useless. As thorns by God’s providence are made serviceable for the defence of better fruit, so the wicked often prove serviceable to the church, and a defence to better men. Though briars and thorns were yet useful to Israel; and so we are told, “the earth helped the woman, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth,” Rev. xii. 16.

The nature of wicked men is not to do good, but to rend and tear ; but God alters their nature, at least restrains their rage, for his people's sake. The church of God is as a bush burning, but not consumed. When potent princes have sought its destruction, God hath frustrated their designs ; sometimes by setting them at variance with one another. So Ammon, and the inhabitants of Mount Seir, destroy each other, when they had decreed to destroy Israel, 2 Chron. xx. 23 ; and the council could not agree against Paul, Acts xxiii. 7. God maintained Noah against a world of wicked men ; and Lot, in the midst of Sodom ; and Israel, in Egypt ; and Mordecai, against Haman and all his enemies ; and he often gives his people favour in the eyes of those who, were they not restrained, would become their mortal enemies and their bloody persecutors.

O my soul, admire the providence and wisdom of God, that can bring light out of darkness, order out of confusion, good out of evil ; and can turn a curse into a blessing, and make his churches' enemies become their friends. Thou wast one of those thorns, and thy nature was as bad ; and if God hath taken thee off the stock of nature, and planted thee in that choice vine, bless his name : no thanks are due to thee. If now thou art a rose, though encompassed by a thousand thorns, he will defend thee ; if thy ways please God, thy enemies themselves shall be at peace with thee, Prov. xvi. 7. Sin is the only enemy between God and the soul ; and if God have a controversy with the sinner, all the creatures are presently up in arms to bring in

the rebel, and wait but for a commission to take away his life. But if God be reconciled to thee, no enemy can hurt thee ; no weapon formed against his church shall ever prosper, Isa. lix. 17. When Jacob had made his peace with God, neither Laban nor Esau could quarrel with him ; though, it is thought, both came forth with murderous intentions. A godly man shall be “ in league with the stones of the field ; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace” with him, Job v. 23. “ Fear not, little flock,” saith Christ, “ for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” Luke xii. 32. And it is better to be of the little number of roses, than the great number of thorns. It is better to be with Noah in the ark, than with the whole world in the flood ; and to go to heaven alone, than to hell with company. If thou art a rose, ere long thou shalt be put into Christ’s bosom : if thou art a thorn, ere long thou shalt be cast into the fire.

•O my God, I am wild by nature. If grapes grow on thorns, or figs on thistles, it is thy doing to alter the stock, and transplant it. If I be a thorn, Lord, change my nature : if I be a rose, Lord, preserve me in the midst of mine enemies, till I come to maturity, and then lodge me in thy own bosom.

Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world : but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ, Eph. ii. 12, 13.

XXVII.—UPON THE RECEIVING IN OF THE FRUITS.

AT the end of the year, when I received in the crop, the fruits of the earth, for which I had laboured, and for which I had long waited, I was put in mind of the reward which believers shall receive at the last day, at the hand of God, for all the labour, toil, and trouble they have had, which will be a better recompense than the earth can give the husbandman for his pains. “ Let us not be weary in well-doing ; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not,” Gal. vi. 9. “ He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting,” ver. 8. “ They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him,” Psa. cxxvi. 5, 6. “ Be patient therefore, brethren,” saith the apostle, “ unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient ; stablish your hearts : for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh,” James v. 7, 8. Now believers sow the seed, and water it with their tears ; but it is not long before the reward comes : “ Behold, I come quickly,” saith Christ, “ and

my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be," Rev. xxii. 12. " Hold out faith and patience," saith the martyr, " your work will presently be at an end." Hope holds up the husbandman's heart, and may much more the Christian's. These things also put me in mind of the great harvest, at the end of the world, when the great Husbandman shall send out his servants, the angels, to reap down his field, and gather in his corn. " The field is the world ; the good seed are the children of the kingdom ; but the tares are the children of the wicked one ; the enemy that sowed them is the devil ; the harvest is the end of the world ; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire ; so shall it be in the end of this world," Matt. xiii. 38—40. The day is coming when all shall be brought to judgment, and the precious shall be separated from the vile ; the good corn shall be brought into the barn, but the tares are reserved for the fire.

O my soul, what seed hast thou sown against that harvest ? Hast thou sown to the flesh ? then of the flesh thou wilt reap corruption. If to the Spirit, thou wilt of the Spirit reap life everlasting ? What grain art thou ? art thou wheat, or tares ? Rest not satisfied till thou know that thou art wheat, and neither with the tares bring forth bad fruit, nor with the chaff fly away with the wind. It is not enough to have a flourishing blade ; so the stony ground had, and yet came to nothing. It is not enough to make a profession of religion ; so the foolish virgins did, they had lamps but no oil ; a profession, but no grace. It is not enough

have talents, but thou must improve them, or thou wilt be sent to outer darkness. It is not enough to grow in the same field, be manured by the same hand, heated by the same sun, and watered with the same showers; thus the tares were; but there must be good seed, well rooted, springing up, and bearing fruit in thy heart. Thou mayest live under the same minister, enjoy the same ordinance with the wheat, and yet still be but a tare.

O my God, discover myself to myself, and let me not be deceived by a cunning devil and a deceitful heart. If I be a tare, Lord, let me know it, ere it be too late; that I may sow better seed in my field; that I may be gathered into thy barn, and not be bound up with the tares for the fire. Let my heart bring forth good fruit for the basket, good wheat for thy barn, solid wheat that may not be blown away with the wind, and much fruit that I may glorify thy name. Let me not sow to the flesh, but to the Spirit; that I may not reap corruption, but life everlasting. Let me not be deceived in so great a concern as the salvation of my soul.

The wicked are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away, Job xxi. 18.

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire, Matt. iii. 12.

XXVIII.—UPON THE WINNOWING OF THE S~~E~~D.

WHEN the seed had been gathered in, and had been threshed or beat out, the next work was winnowing it, whereby the chaff and refuse, the lightest, emptiest part, was blown away with the wind; but the solid, substantial, weighty grain, was not hurt by it, but benefited; it was refined and purified. I saw that what the furnace was to metal, such is the fan to the corn, that which separateth, purgeth and purifieth it. This made me compare temporal with spiritual things, and consider, that God has many ways to purge and try his people. Sometimes he casts them into the furnace of affliction, and tries them this way; “others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment,” Heb. xi. 36; and sometimes he tries them with the fan, to see what solidity is in them. “The messenger of the covenant shall come; but who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver,” Mal. iii. 1—3. Then many a gilded piece will be found counterfeit, and much seeming gold prove to be but dross; but true gold neither fears the furnace nor the touchstone. Then the sincere Christian and the hypocrite will be distinguished, which now are hardly known asunder. In this world they may grow in the same field, as did the

wheat and the tares ; but they shall never lie in the same garner together, for this is reserved for the wheat alone. Here they may benefit one the other, as the straw bears up the wheat, and the chaff and piles defend it from injury, and they are preserved, secured, and fed for the wheat's sake ; but hereafter the godly will not need their protection, and the other shall not have preservation. Here the earth helps the woman, and the innocent save the island, Job xxii. 30 ; and so both shall grow together till the harvest, but then they shall be separated one from another, Matt. xiii. 30. Now there are several fans ; Satan has his fan ; " And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," Luke xxii. 31, 32. Satan's end in sifting is not to purify, but to destroy ; his sieve holds nothing but refuse, the best runs through : but God's sieve preserves the best, and severs it from the chaff. There is a fan of scoffs and scorns, and of persecution, which is in the hands of wicked men ; and much of the lighter chaff is blown away by this fan, and cannot stand before it. There is also another fan, and that is of errors and heresies, and this takes away not the chaff only, but some of the lighter sort of corn, yea, and if possible, the very elect. This the apostle warns professors of, that they be not like " children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine," Eph. iv. 14. And how many such hearers are there, that are cast into what mould the preacher pleases, and, like glasses, are by the breath blown into any shape : but ere long Christ him-

self will come with his fan, “ whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner ; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire,” Matt. iii. 12.

O my soul, are there trying times to come ; wherein grace will be known from its counterfeit ; and when the axe will be put to the root of the tree, and every one that brings not forth good fruit shall be hewn down, and cast into the fire ? Matt. iii. 10. Must the dross be consumed, and the chaff be driven away of the wind ? Examine, and be sure that thou art true gold, solid grain, and a tree of righteousness, bringing forth good fruit ; that thou exceedest hypocrites, and hast something they have not, and canst do something they cannot do ; that thou mayest be able to abide the “ refiner’s fire, and the allets’ soap,” Mal. iii. 2 ; see that the house of thy profession be built upon the rock , that no wind nor weather, storms nor tempests, floods nor waves of trouble may molest thee. Trouble will come ; there is no prevention : sometimes lighter afflictions, as smaller rain ; and sometimes greater, as the overflowing of Jordan. Amidst these woes, thy ship had need be like the ark, pitched within and without ; yea, thou hadst need to be shut in by God himself. A true Christian is like Mount Sion, that cannot be moved ; when he is founded upon this rock, he need fear neither wind nor weather ; if he fall, Christ himself must fall ; and it would be better to fall with him than stand without him. Christ lives in him ; and while Christ, who is the life of his soul, lives, he cannot die. But if thy house be built upon the sand, when the

winds and waves come, and come they will, it will surely fall down, and great will be the fall thereof, because irresistible and irreparable.

“O my God, are trying times coming? And must I be sifted by Satan, winnowed by the world, and fanned by Christ? Who can stand in these trials, and bear up against these floods and waves, without Divine assistance? Lord, give me strength from above; for vain is the help of man. Make me solid grain that may abide the wind; true gold that may abide the fire; and build me upon that Rock that is high, that no storms nor tempests may beat me down, nor all the floods in the world ever remove me.

The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness, Mal. iii. 1—3.

Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.

XXIX. --ON THE PRODUCTION OF CHAFF
FROM CLEAN SEED.

WHEN I beheld how the seed, that last year I had so carefully winnowed and purified from chaff, and sown in my garden, pure and good, when it came to maturity, was not only cumbered with weeds and other annoyances, which the ground naturally cast up, but had as much stalk, chaff, and other rubbish as it had the year before, which grew up with it, and adhered to it, and was naturally produced by the seed ; and that it had as much need of weeding, threshing, and winnowing, as it had the year before, to make it fit for use or market :—this reminded me that thus it has been with the human race since the fall. A gracious man, who has taken much pains with his heart to weed out corruption, and mortify sin, and has been fanned and purified many years, and that not without much labour, pains, and diligence, and many a prayer and tear, yet has not necessarily godly children ; but chaff, and corruption adheres to them also, nay inheres in them, and they have as much need of refining as ever the father had. And though God do more usually make choice of his people out of such families, the covenant being with them and their seed, and has respect to their prayers, and gives a blessing to their education and exhortations,

yet this is not always so, neither are they born thus; for they are the “children of wrath, even as others,” Eph. ii. 3; and though sin be hereditary, grace is not.

Ah, sin! what confusion hast thou made in the world! the most of men perish eternally by thee, and those that escape, are saved, as by fire, with a very great deal of pains and difficulty. Holy David was the father of lascivious Amnon and rebellious Absalom; pious Isaac, of profane Esau; yea, and faithful Abraham, of scoffing Ishmael. For, as a learned man has not necessarily a learned child, (for learning is not a birth privilege, but an acquired qualification,) so grace is not born with, but freely given to those whom God thinks fit to bestow it upon. A rich man’s child comes into the world as naked, destitute, and miserably impotent and helpless as any other. This, as it may remind us of our miserable condition by the fall, so also of our duty to our children, that as we are careful of their bodies, so should we be much more careful of their souls; and as we are careful that they get learning, so should we be much more that they get grace. An estate is not so needful as an interest in Christ. We should endeavour, by instruction, correction, and good education, to train them up in the fear of God; and, when we can do no more, to go to him who is able to give it, to beg grace for them; for, as we were instrumental in their ruin, so we should seek their recovery. But too many train up their children, just as they train their horses; teach them to drudge, and think they have done well;

especially if they can leave them an estate behind them, which oftentimes is so badly acquired as to entail a curse upon them and their posterity ; and God does, in a visible manner, punish their children to the third and fourth generation.

O my soul, how stands the case with thee ? Thou art a child of wrath by nature, as well as others. Is thy relation to thy God changed ? Of an enemy art thou an adopted son ? Thou hadst dross ; is that consumed, and the soul refined ? Thou hadst chaff ; is that blown away ? Hast thou the marks of adoption now upon thee, that formerly hadst the marks of an enemy ? Dost thou resemble thy father ? dost thou bear his image ? God has no children who have not some resemblance to him ; he never adopts any, but he changes their nature and disposition, as well as their relation : he hath no unnatural children. Has he made good that promise to thee, "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," 2 Cor. vi. 18. Has he performed the duty of a father, in thy new birth, in maintaining thee, and in instructing and correcting thee ; and hast thou the nature, dispositions, and privileges of his children ? Hast thou communion with him ? Does he feed thee with bread from heaven ? clothe thee with the robes of righteousness, and adorn thee with the jewels of his grace ? Is there a thorough change wrought in thee, and a new nature put into thee ? Hast thou given up thy heart as well as thy name to Christ ? If it be so, it is well. If thou hast this privilege for thyself, seek it for thy children also. As thou hast

dedicated them to God, do thy endeavour to make them God's; and that the work of grace may be timely wrought in their souls, curb corruption while they are young: a green twig will easily be bended; but when old and dry, the work is difficult. Withhold not correction nor instruction, and go to God for a blessing upon both.

O my God, am I wild by nature, and hast thou planted me into the true olive? Hast thou taken me off my own stock, and planted me into the true vine? Lord, what shall I render to thee for this? Lord, help me to give up my heart as well as my name to thee, and may I *live* thanks as well as *speak* thanks. Hast thou made me a son? Lord, give me a son-like disposition, and let me honour my God by a holy life and conversation. And oh, that my children might live before thee. Lord, purge out the dross, blow away their chaff, make them thy sons and thy daughters.

Jesus answered "and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.—That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, John iii. 3, 6.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people, Heb. viii. 10

XXX.—UPON A VIPER LURKING IN THE GRASS.

WALKING in the garden, I had nearly trod upon a viper lurking in the grass, and so was in unexpected danger where I least dreaded it. When the agitation it occasioned me had somewhat abated, it made me consider what daily need we have of Divine protection, and how unsafe it is to be from under the providence of God. It led me also to consider, that thus it is in all our earthly enjoyments : there is no security in any, much danger in all ; there is a little honey, and many stings ; a little pleasure, and much pain : there is no age, no calling, no condition of life free. Riches are held by many to be the greatest happiness, and more valued than holiness and grace ; yet are they not without their snares, they cannot place their possessors out of the reach of danger ; they are called deceitful riches, Matt. xiii. 22 ; and well they may be so called, for they always deceive those who trust them : they promise content, satisfaction, and happiness, when oftentimes, like strong drink in a fever, they do but enrage the appetite ; “ he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver,” Eccl. v. 10. But this is not all their vanity ; for as they are unsatisfying, so they are uncertain ; “ they make themselves wings, and fly away,” Prov. xxiii. 5 ; they are never true to those who trust them ; they are often as transitory as a headlong torrent. In like manner, pleasures are commonly followed by a

sting: "in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness: favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain," Prov. xiv. 13; xxxi. 30; and those who trust to them shall be deceived. Favour will fail and beauty will wither, and how will they deceive men's expectation! Honour is the emptiest of all bubbles, courted by many, attained by few; and there is but a little distance between the highest round of the ladder and the lowest step: let Haman and Ahithophel prove the point. Beauty many times is like a blazing star; ominous to the beholders, and hurtful to those that enjoy it. Meat and drink are necessary, yet to many their table becomes their snare; and by a plentiful table they come to be guilty of gluttony and drunkenness: "wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise," Prov. xx. 1. Learning and great parts are lovely endowments, but many times they prove dangerous and deadly: the greatest scholars often prove the greatest enemies to Christ, and the greatest adversaries to the power of godliness. In a word, those that have most of the world have frequently the least of heaven: "Son," said Abraham, "remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented," Luke xvi. 25. I know there are some who follow Christ's counsel as to the proper use of wealth, and make to themselves "friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," Luke xvi. 9; but most, on the contrary, do "but increase their account by it, and at the reckoning day will prove bankrupts, and owe ten thousand talents which

they will never be able to pay. Earthly enjoyments usually rock men in the cradle of security. Even the things that are in themselves lawful blessings, yet when abused, prove our ruin ; when immoderately used, they prove a sin and a snare.

O my soul, thou walkest in the midst of dangers ; snares are laid for thee in every creature, in every corner : trust not therefore to any ; the most innocent will betray thee, if not heedfully observed and wisely enjoyed ; the most harmless, nay, the most necessary enjoyments are not free from snares ; a serpent may lie under thy feet ; many temptations are in poverty, more in plenty : pray therefore, with Agur, “ Give me neither poverty nor riches ; feed me with food convenient for me,” Prov. xxx. 8.

O my God, are there so many dangers that attend me, both in reference to my body and my soul ! Oh what need have I of Divine protection ! Lord, be thou my defender, keep me under the shadow of thy wings. O let not Satan, the world, or my own deceitful heart, ever betray me ; but let me be kept by the mighty power of God unto salvation, 1 Pet. i. 5.

Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itsclf aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder, Prov. xxiii. 31, 32.

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares, Luke xxi. 34.

XXI.—UPON THE BEE.

I OBSERVED the busy and laborious bee ; how diligent he was in his employment, and how industriously he toiled from morning to night, in gathering both honey and wax, which, when he had collected, he was as industrious in the disposal of it. I also observed how nice and careful he was in furnishing his little cell with the provision he had got by his hard labour ; how skilful in building his combs, placing his honey, disposing and feeding his young ones : so perfect is he in all his workmanship, that nothing redundant can be seen, nothing deficient ; and in all his little fabric so exact a symmetry appears, as is admirable to behold. The very first day he is placed in his new habitation, he cleanses and adorns it, and makes it fit to begin his work ; and from that day all the bees join cheerfully in the work, and jointly and severally study to promote the common good. I observed also in their work, how they gathered honey both from flowers and weeds, and, as I thought, made little difference, but extracted the quintessence of them for their own use, and that without any damage, so far as I could perceive, to the herb or flower.

These, and some such like considerations and observations, made me to think these poor insects resemble a diligent Christian, who improves every

thing for his Master's glory, and the enriching of his own soul, and gathers good from all events. And here the slothful Christian may be sent to school to the bee, as Solomon sends him to the ant to learn diligence, Prov. vi. 6. There is great reason why men should be more diligent than these poor insects: the diligence of the one is for the soul, of the others for the body. If the one want, death ends its misery; if the other want, death begins its torment. These poor creatures have nothing to excite them but a natural instinct; but man has the use of reason, the directions of the Scripture, and the assistance of the Spirit, the ministry, conscience, etc. to animate him. These have indeed flowers and herbs, trees and weeds, etc. to gather honey from; but man has a larger field to wander over, even the whole creation: there is not a stone, or dead tree, or withering branch, or falling leaf, or decaying flower, but will yield him wisdom, if he have the heavenly art of extracting it. They are feeble creatures; man is endowed with more strength. We have a better prize before us, and have a better help. We can work by day or by night, in winter and summer, in frost and snow, when they are hindered: and yet, to our shame be it spoken, they are more diligent, and we more negligent.

O my soul, how may these little insects rise up in judgment against thee, and condemn thee. Thou hast hitherto done little; winter is drawing on apace: what provision hast thou made? The night approaches, when no man can work: what honey hast thou gathered? Thou hast had as favourable a summer as most in the world have had,

and a long harvest, and yet art thou unfurnished : what will be the issue of it ? will the season of grace always last ? The Bridegroom is coming, where is thy oil ? the marriage feast is near, where is thy wedding garment ?

O my God, pardon my former neglects and mispending of precious time. , Lord, keep me close to my work, during my little time that yet remains, and succeed me in it, that I may gather honey against the coming winter, and may not be unprovided at death.

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep : for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand : let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.—But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, Rom. xiii. 11, 12, 14.

See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil, Eph. v. 15, 16.

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.—Therefore let us not sleep, as do others : but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night ; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love ; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation, 1 Thess. v. 2, 6—8.

XXXII.—UPON MANY CREATURES SEEMINGLY
DEAD IN WINTER.

WHEN I considered how divers insects, some serpents, and other animals, which in the heat of summer are active and lively, but without wisdom or inclination to make any provision for the coming winter, are yet, by the mighty power of God, preserved during it without meat; for though they sleep, and even seem to die, yet in the following spring, when the sun returns in his strength, they recover, and the species is continued:—this made me admire the wonderful providence of the only wise God, that these creatures should live the one-half of the year without food. It reminded me of God's question to the prophet, and of his answer. God says, “Can these bones live?” and he said, “O Lord God, thou knowest,” Ezek. xxxvii. 3. It is not in man's power to preserve them, nor beyond the power of God: with man it seems impossible, but “with God all things are possible,” Matt. xix. 26. Men may want power to execute their will; nature herself may be interrupted in her course, as it was when the fire burned not up the three worthies, and the water did not drown Peter walking upon it: Satan may be crossed, and chained up that he cannot hurt; but who can hinder the Almighty: there is nothing can

overmatch an omnipotent arm. This vises ~~and~~ think, also, God can preserve his children's lives in spite of his enemies. "If they take away their meat," saith the martyr, "God can take away their hunger." Why not, as well as he does the sense of other creatures? and he will do it rather than his promise shall fail. Elijah goes in the strength of one meal forty days; and, had God pleased, it might have been forty years; for he could have preserved the Israelites forty years in the wilderness without food as well as with food from heaven, and as well as he preserved their garments from waxing old. "I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot," Deut. xxix. 5. They needed not to care what they should eat, or what they should drink, or wherewithal they should be clothed, Matt. vi. 31, for God made provision for all these wants; they were maintained at God's cost and charges.

Methought also, this cessation of action in these creatures in winter, did much resemble sleep, which, if God pleased, might be as long in other animals; and, were it not common, would be thought wonderful and little differing from death itself: and yet experience shows us, that which seems to destroy nature, restores and refreshes it. But, above all, it resembles our lying in the grave, and our rising again at the resurrection; for the body sleeps in the dust till the last day, as these creatures do in their holes till the winter is past, and the spring approaches; and then it will be revived by the Sun of righteousness,

at into it; then these dry bones shall live. This I know some question and some deny, possibly because they cannot fathom the depth of this providence; and, were they not convinced by yearly experience of the other, they would deny that also, and would think it could not be, that creatures should have their life preserved the one half of the year at least without food, because they know not how it should be. But I think few articles of our faith are more clearly proved in Scripture than this of the resurrection. But many men, I fear, are wilfully blind; their lives and conversations being so debauched, they would believe, at least wish they could believe, there were no resurrection of the body, yea, that the soul were mortal as well as the body, and that the death of the one were the destruction of the other also; but the time is coming, they shall find the contrary to their sorrow. Both Scripture and reason speak plainly that the soul is immortal, and that the body partaking with it in holiness or sin, shall also partake with it in weal or woe; and that there will be a day of retribution, when those who now suffer for Christ shall then reign with him, and those who sin shall suffer for their sin. The contrary to this cannot stand with Scripture revelations, the threatenings of the law, the promises of the gospel, nor with Divine justice itself; and why should any think it impossible for God to gather our dust together, and raise up our dead bodies at the last, who yet believe that there is a God, and that he hath made not only man, but the whole creation of nothing, and that this God

is just, and will make good both his promises and threatenings, and that nothing is too hard for an omnipotent arm ?

O my soul, distrust not God's word, question not his power. He that can make all things of nothing, can of thy scattered ashes raise up thy dead body to life, and reunite it to thy soul ; and he that says he will do it, will certainly perform it : heaven and earth shall pass, but not one tittle of his word shall pass till all be fulfilled. Call not in question the power and providence of God, but labour to have a part in the first resurrection, that the second death may have no power, Rev. xx. 6. Get fitted for death and judgment ; get sin pardoned and subdued, which is the sting of death ; get grace implanted, and thy soul married unto Christ ; then needest thou not fear death, nor the resurrection.

O my God, strengthen my faith, confirm my hope, and increase my love to thee ; and let me long for the time that I may enjoy thee in glory, and lie for ever in thy everlasting arms.

Is any thing too hard for the Lord ? Gen. xviii. 14.

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead ? Acts xxvi. 8.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him, 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.

XXXIII.—UPON THE SINGING OF BIRDS.

WHEN I observed, in a warm morning in the spring-time, how merrily the birds did chirp and sing, in every tree, and hedge, and bush, and in their language did chant out their Maker's praise and their Benefactor's glory, and what various tunes and notes they sent forth, each one adding something to the melody ; this occasion'd in me the following meditation. These little birds, that neither reap nor sow, nor carry into barns, Matt. vi. 26, live upon their Creator's providence, and when they have eaten their breakfast, know not where to have their dinner, but depend upon their Maker's allowance ; and yet how cheerful and unconcerned they seem to be, void of care and fear : when hunger returns, they seek their meat where Divine Providence directs them, and take no care for the morrow, leaving it to God to make provision for them. “ The eyes of all wait upon thee ; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing,” Psa. cxlv. 15, 16.

The consideration of this made me reflect upon my own self, and to observe my own faults and failings. O my soul, art not thou justly reproved by these little creatures, and hast thou not behaved thyself worse to thy God than these have

done? Art not thou better than many sparrows? Luke xii. 7. Why then dost thou despise more than they, and distrust thy Father's providence? Hast not thou more promises to depend upon than ever they had? and more experiences of Divine Providence, both in former deliverances and continual protection and provision? Thou hast the use of reason, which they want, to assist thee, and some comfortable hopes of the truth of grace, and that God has accepted thee, received thee into his family, and adopted thee for his child; thou hast the word and ordinances to bear thee up, and many promises of Divine protection and provision which they have not; many encouragements from God himself; read Matt. vi. 25, to the end, and Matt. x. throughout, and see whether there be any cause of desponding. It is thy duty to be careful for nothing, but to make thy request known to God in prayer, Phil. iv. 6. Children make their needs known to their parents, and trusting in them fear no want; nor need they, their parents take care for them: and these very birds, if wisely observed and diligently heeded, might root those distracting cares out of thy heart, and teach thee to cast all thy care upon God, who careth for thee.

But though thou hast not wanted, thou art questioning with Israel, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" Psa. lxxviii. 19. What if this cruse of oil fail, and this barrel of meal be wasted? what shall I eat? what shall I drink then? or wherewithal shall I be clothed? If these or these things happen, what will become of me or mine? What if famine come? or what if I be

put into prison ? or that little I have be taken from me ? What if I be banished, sent into some remote wilderness, etc. how shall I be fed ? how shall I be clothed ? what will become of my wife and children ? etc. As if, when the pipe is cut, there were no water in the fountain. Are not these sometimes thy thoughts and fears ? and though thou hast had many silent providences, and God unexpectedly has removed thy doubts, and answered thy objections, yet, upon new apprehensions of danger, how hard dost thou find it to trust God, upon his bare word, when the world frowns ? or to depend upon him when deliverance is out of sight ? Has not Christ himself told thee, that if thou seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, all other things shall be added unto thee, Matt. vi. 33. Grace is the way to glory, and holiness to happiness ; if men be not gracious, there is no heaven to be had ; if they are, they shall have heaven, and earth also : for godliness has the " promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8. All earthly enjoyments that are good for thee, are entailed upon piety ; but alas ! the strength of the ground is so spent in nourishing weeds and trash, that the good corn is starved and choked : these thorns choke the seed, and it becomes unfruitful, Matt. xiii. 22. Has not God promised that he will " never leave thee, nor forsake thee ?" Heb. xiii. 5 ; and is not this better than if all the kings upon earth had said to thee that thou shalt want nothing that is good. And wouldest thou have that which is hurtful ? was he ever known to be worse than

his word ? and canst thou imagine he^r will first fail thee ? Will he that feeds the fowls, and clothes the grass, starve the children ?

O my soul, make sure of the main thing, and use diligence for the rest. Cast thy care upon God, and make thy requests known to God, and he can as well deny himself, as deny thee in any lawful suit : five thousand years' experience cannot produce an instance of any godly man that was forsaken. Make sure of the main covenant, and all other things will be given in.

O my God, "I believe ; help thou mine unbelief," Mark ix. 24 : pardon my distracting and distrustful thoughts, increase my faith, silence my doubts and fears, by clearing up my evidences for heaven.

Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving ; sing praise upon the harp unto our God : who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry, Psa. cxlvii. 7—9.

Be careful for nothing ; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, Phil. iv. 6, 7.

Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come, 1 Tim. iv. 8.

XXXIV.—UPON THE TONES OF A PARROT.

HEARING a parrot talk an counterfeit man's voice, and utter words which yet he understood not ; when I had considered it, I thought it was a lively emblem of a hypocrite : for as this bird imitates man, and counterfeits his voice, so does a hypocrite imitate a true Christian, both in words and gestures, speaks as : speaks, and acts as he acts, for what action or what duty can a Christian perform, as to the external part of it, which a hypocrite cannot, does not do ? As there is no herb in the garden, but there is some counterfeit of it in the field, which resembles it, so there is no grace in the heart of a believer, but the hypocrite has its counterfeit. What can a true Christian do in respect of duty, but a hypocrite can do also, yea, sometimes seem to exceed him ? And as in duty, so in conference and discourse, it is hard to discern the one from the other. There is indeed a difference now, both in garb and language ; the one is truly beautiful, the other is but paint and varnish, which time makes to fade : they speak, it is true, the same things, but the one speaks what he knows, and the other by hearsay ; both may discourse of the deep mysteries of religion, but the one class understandeth not what they say. Can a true Christian discourse of redemption, regeneration,

conversion, adoption, sanctification, etc. ? so can the other also : but the one speaks what he feels, the other not ; the Christian finds the marks and tokens of it in his own soul, the other not. Can the one discourse of the workings of the Spirit in the heart of a believer, the actings of grace, of communion with God, etc. ? so can the other. Can the one utter his experiences of the goodness of God, the vanity of the creature, the bitterness of sin, the comforts and directions of the Spirit, the beauty of holiness, etc. ? the other can count this also. But all this while the hypocrite's heart and tongue agree not : he declaims against that sin which he loves, and pleads for the holiness and integrity which he secretly hates and abhors, and speaks well of God and his laws, his ordinances, and his people, which in his heart he abhors. The knowledge of the one differs from the knowledge of the other as much as that of a traveller who has been at Rome, or Venice, or Jerusalem, or Constantinople, and has seen those places, and known their inhabitants, and dwelt among them, differs from his who has only heard or read of them, or spoken with those who have seen them. The latter perhaps may speak as much (nay more) of the situation of the place, the manners of the people, the government, customs and laws they are ruled by, than the former can ; yet their knowledge is not alike. The one is assured by ocular demonstration of what he speaks, the other not : "These eyes saw it," says one ; "These ears heard it," saith the other. So it is here, one speaks what he knows, the other what he hears. Or it is like the difference

between the knowledge of a diseased person, and that of a physician; the latter can speak more of the causes, signs, and symptoms of the disease, and more learnedly describe it, but the other feels what he says, and knows the working of the disease in another way than the physician who has only read of it, or heard of it from others. This is the difference of the knowledge between the sincere Christian and the hypocrite; the one speaks knowingly, experimentally, feelingly, truly; the other speaks by rote, dissemblingly, and falsely, pretending to experience which he has not.

O my soul, take heed of contenting and satisfying thyself with a bare notional knowledge, without experimental heart knowledge; it is not that which floats in the head, but that which sinks down and seasons the heart and life that will do thee good; the former a man may carry along with him to hell, yea, the devils have it in a greater measure than the most knowing man. Though bad words may, yea will condemn thee, if not repented of; yet good words, if any such can be, without good actions and good hearts, cannot save thee; yea, thou wilt be guilty of self-condemnation in justifying what thou dost not labour after. If godliness and a holy life be good, why dost thou not live thus? If not, why dost thou speak thus? Why do not thy heart and tongue agree. Sincerity is the true philosopher's stone; it turns all into gold, and makes weak performances acceptable; hypocrisy turns all into dross.

O my God, grant me heart knowledge as well

as head knowledge, lest I go to hell with a candle in my hand. Such knowledge may serve to sink me, not to save me. To talk of the way and not walk in it, little profits; to speak of heaven, and not enjoy it, will do me no good. Lord, let me be in substance what I am in show; yea, Lord, make me such as I ought to be in truth.

This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men, Isa. xxix. 13.

They come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness, Ezek. xxxiii. 31.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.—But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking, Matt. vi. 5, 7.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven, Matt. vii. 21.

The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power, 1 Cor. iv. 20.

XXXV.--UPON BIRDS OBSERVING THEIR SEASONS
OF COMING AND RETURNING.

WHEN I observed the ~~cockoo~~, the swallow, and many other sorts of birds, how exactly they observed their seasons, both in coming and returning ; and all other birds, how exact they were in their building and breeding, and lost not the opportunity, nor neglected the season, I thought to my mind God's complaint against Israel, his own people, and I thought how justly it might be charged against us. "The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times ; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming ; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord," Jer. viii. 7. As if he should say, "These silly birds, by a natural instinct, without the use of reason, knew the times and seasons of their going and returning ; but my people, who have greater helps and advantages, yet take no notice of the seasons of grace, and of the times of their visitation. He complains likewise, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib : but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider," Isa. i. 3 : few consider the time of their visitation, or take notice of the footsteps of God's departure. Christ also complains of such as could discern the face of the sky, but could not discern the signs of the times,

Matt. xvi. 2, 3 ; as if he should say, " Are you so weather-wise that you can foresee the rain, and are you so ignorant of Scripture that you know not the time when the Messiah should come ? " " O Jerušalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not," Matt. xxiii. 37. " When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix. 41, 42. They had lived under the ministry long, but no change was perceived.

O poor man, how art thou degenerated, even below the fowls of heaven, or the beasts of the earth ! Thou wast made a prince over the works of God's hands, and all the terrestrial creatures were subjected to thee, and now art thou sent to the ox and ass to learn of them thy duty ; and does their understanding outreach thine ? Most men are apt enough to take advantages for the world ; they will not neglect seed-time, nor harvest, neither will they omit fair or market which their business may call them to ; they suit their business to the season of the year ; the mariner observes both the wind and tide. And yet these very persons, whom the world call good managers, are very fools in reference to the soul, and let slip spiritual advantages ; they provide not in summer for winter, in the day for the night, nor in this life for that which is to come. Now

the candle of the Lord shines upon our heads, and through his light we walk through darkness ; the secret of the Lord is upon our pavilion, Job xxix. 3, 4 : the season of grace is yet continued ; the harvest is not quite over ; the market-day is not past, and we may lay in provision for the soul ; the means of grace are yet afforded us. But how soon winter may approach we know not ; how soon the sun of the gospel may set, and night come, we cannot tell, “ when no man can work—the shadows of the evening are stretched out,” John ix. 4 ; Jer. vi. 4 ; and the night seems to be approaching, and ere long our day may be over, and never dawn again. It is our wisdom to observe our season, and work while we have the light. The time of our visitation is called a day, for the shortness of it, and yet we are not sure this day shall have twelve hours ; many a man’s sun sets at noon. God may remove his candlestick from us, as he did from the seven Asian churches ; or his dwelling from us, as from Shiloh ; and where are we then ? “ Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel,” Jer. vii. 12. And may not he say thus of England ? What assurance have we more than they of God’s continued presence, if our sins equal theirs ? The abuse of mercies, the contempt of the ordinance, the abuse of his ministers, and the making light of Christ himself, are crying sins, and may well awaken anxiety.

O my soul, observe the seasons of grace afforded to thee by God ; for, whether thou improve them or

not, they must be upon thine account. Take the opportunities put into thy hands. Improve every talent God hath lent thee, and let none rust by thee. Cherish every motion of the Spirit, and blow it up into a flame. This is thy seed-time, where thou must sow what thou must reap in eternity ; “ Whosoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting ;” and “ he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly ;” Gal. vi. 7, 8 ; 2 Cor. ix. 6. This also is thy harvest-time, lay in for winter ; it is thy market-day, fetch in provision ; it is thy now or never, neglect it not.

O my God, rouse up my dull and drowsy soul by some quickening considerations, and let me not sleep away my time in security ; rather spur me on by some affection, than suffer me to fall short of my journey’s end. Let me live every day as if it were my last, and perform every duty as if I were presently to give an account of it to God.

Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is ; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth ; and mine age is as nothing before thee, Psa. xxxix. 4, 5.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.—O satisfy us early with thy mercy ; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days, Psa. xc. 12, 14.

XXXVI.—ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A WELL
MANAGED AND A NEGLECTED ORCHARD.

WHEN I observed the difference between a well manured and well managed orchard, and one that was slighted and carelessly cultivated: when I beheld in the one the trees orderly ranked, not too near nor at too great a distance, carefully pruned also, and freed from superfluous branches, and the suckers cleansed from moss and other offensive enemies; the whole manured and fenced from the violence of cattle; and, in a word, that the orchard answered expectation, and made amends for the care and cost: whereas the other was neither handsome to the eye, nor profitable to the owner, lying open to the beasts of the field, out of order and shape; some trees too thick, others too thin; most overgrown with moss, suckers, cankers, and unprofitable branches; the ground overrun with briars, brambles, and other unprofitable weeds; and the fruit, thus choked and spoiled, proved accordingly. By this I saw the difference between diligence and sloth: "In all labour," saith Solomon, "there is profit," Prov. xiv. 23; that is, all honest labour. We should work with our hands the thing that is good, Eph. iv. 28. Some labour diligently to do mischief, and take pains to go to hell; there is small profit in this work: and some take great pains to small

purpose. Some take as much pains to spend their estate, as others do to acquire it ; and more pains in the way to hell, than others in the way to heaven. But diligence, even in earthly business, is doubtless a commanded duty, and negligence is a forbidden sin ; the one brings profit and the other loss. The apostle says of those that will not labour, that they shall not eat, 2 Thess. iii. 10 : and it is an apostolical command, that we labour with our hands, that we may be able to give to those that need, Eph. iv. 28. " He becometh poor," says Solomon, " that dealeth with a slack hand : but the hand of the diligent maketh rich," Prov. x. 4. Diligence usually, though not constantly, is attended with abundance ; but the sluggard shall be covered with rags. We read, in Prov. xxiv. 30 —34, that Solomon " went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding ; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well : I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep : so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth ; and thy want as an armed man," that is, unexpectedly and irresistibly. Idleness is the nurse of beggary, the mother of misery, and the forerunner of ruin.

This made me raise my meditations a little higher. I considered, if idleness be so great a hinderance to worldly advantages, what is it then to spiritual profits ? If ground not manured brings

forth briars and thorns, weeds and thistles, what will the soul bring forth if it be neglected? this will soon abound with sins and vices, lusts and corruptions. The soul is more subject to the weeds of sin, than any field or garden can be to briars or thorns, or other noisome things; and more diligence is required to keep it in order, and there is more danger in the neglect. Briars and thorns are not more natural to the ground since the curse, than sin and corruption to the soul since the fall.

O my soul, refuse no pains, neglect no labour, heaven will make amends for all; pluck up thy sins by the root, and content not thyself to lop off the branches; regulate thy affection, subdue thy headstrong passions, bring under thy will, and make it submit to God's will; set a watch over thy heart, look well to thy words and thoughts as well as to thy actions; set a guard over thy senses, otherwise the enemy will enter; take heed of thy company, for seldom good is got by ill companions. Beware of Satan's temptations and the world's allurements; avoid all occasions to sin, nay, all appearances of evil, and know that for all the pains thou canst take thou shalt be rewarded. Heaven will make thee amends; but the sluggard is never likely to come there.

O my God, I have been this spiritual sluggard; it is I have neglected my field and vineyard, and hence are all those briers and brambles sprung up. Lord, help me to double my diligence and amend my pace, and so run that I may obtain, and so fight as to conquer, 1 Cor. ix. 24.

XXXVII.— UPON A GREAT TREE SPRINGING FROM
▲ SMALL KERNEL.

WHEN I beheld some fruit trees grown to a large stature, the persons being yet alive that set them of small kernels, and that not very many years ago; the consideration thereof led me to contemplate the mighty power of God, who, from such contemptible beginnings, could produce so large a body; and that of the small seeds of the cypress tree, such a huge bulk should so soon proceed; and that a slender acorn should bring forth so vast a tree as some oaks are, carrying so many tons of timber.

This brought to my mind the parable of the mustard seed, Matt. xiii. 31, 32, where Christ tells us, though it be the least of seeds, that it grows up to a great tree, and that suddenly, so that the fowls of heaven lodge in the branches of it; for though, in our northern climates, it arrive not to that size, yet travellers speak much of the greatness of it in hotter countries. Our Saviour Christ's intention in this parable, is to teach us, that as from this small seed proceeds a great tree, so is also the progress of the gospel, which though at first it seems contemptible, yet is quick and powerful, and wonderful in operation; becoming a resort in prosperity for shadow, in adversity for defence. In the promulgation of the gospel from small

beginnings, namely, by a few poor unlearned fishermen, it was carried, as on eagles' wings, to the end of the earth, and in a short time subdued potent princes, who set themselves against it, to the admiration of all. In the Reformation, too, how strangely was it carried on ! Wickliff, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, paved a way and opened a door to Luther, who, with a few more, withstood the whole Popish interest, and so prevailed against them, that the locusts which came out of the bottomless pit were never able, by their smoke, to darken the light of the gospel again ; but it brake forth more and more to the perfect day, even to all men's admiration. In many places it was carried on without the ruler's consent, yea contrary to his will ; in Holland, France, Germany, Scotland, and many other countries ; so wonderfully did this little grain spread. And in this nation, by what unexpected means was the Reformation carried on, by a prince who wrote against it, and set himself against it, and yet was instrumental in God's hand to carry on the work. God can make use of whom he pleases to do his work. Heathen Cyrus must be his servant to carry on his design. In the time of Athanasius, how did God vindicate his truth, by small means, against a world of Arians, and made him victorious against them all ! "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," Heb. iv. 12.

By the growth of this mustard seed is signified,

further, not only the spreading abroad of the gospel, in the first promulgation of it, but also the growth of grace in a Christian's heart, which, though it have a small beginning, yet increases wonderfully; the latter end doth greatly increase, Job viii. 7. When the new creature, grace, is formed in the soul by the finger of God, it grows up to maturity till it comes, to a perfect man. When God speaks a word secretly and suddenly to the heart, it fastens itself there, and never releases its hold till the work be done, and the new creature be formed. It is like Elijah's mantle when thrown upon Elisha, which made him leave his oxen and run after him, and desire only to kiss his father and mother, and he would follow him. The prophet said, "Go back again: for what have I done to thee?" 1 Kings xix. 19, 20. But he had done that which so influenced him, that he would not forsake him till he was taken up to heaven, and remained a prophet to his dying day. When God speaks home to the heart, the work is done; when Christ calls Peter and Andrew, James and John, they leave all to follow him, Matt. iv. 18—22. With his word there went forth a secret power, inclining them to follow: the woman of Samaria left her pitcher, and Matthew his toll-book, and Zaccheus his sycamore tree, yea half of his goods, at Christ's call. The smoking flax, it is said, shall not be quenched, and the bruised reed shall not be broken, till he bring forth judgment into victory, Matt. xii. 20. Christ cherishes not the strong oaks only, but the bruised reeds also: he despises not the day of small things, Zech. iv. 10. The least spark of

fire may be cherished into a flame, and the least true grace will be growing ; the very pantings after Christ, and dissatisfaction without him, are highly accounted of by him. The earthquake occasioned such a disquietude in the jailor, that he cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30 ; and the preaching of Peter to those who put Christ to death, so reached their heart, that nothing would satisfy till they knew how they should be saved : so powerful is the word when applied by God to the heart.

O my soul, though the church of God be brought low, despair not yet, it has been so in former times, yet recovered ; and Christ has told thee, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it," Matt. xvi. 18. God will yet say to these dry bones, Live ; and if thy grace be feeble, despair not ; if it be true, though but as a grain of mustard seed, it will spring. If thou art but smoking flax, thou shalt not be quenched ; if a bruised reed, thou shalt not be broken.

O my God, blow upon that spark thou hast given me, that it be not extinguished ; remove the ashes of corruption, that it may appear.

The stone cut out without hands—became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth, Dan. ii. 34, 35.

In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills ; and people shall flow unto it, Micah iv. 1.

XXXVIII.—UPON A CRAB TREE AFTERWARDS
GRAFTED:

OBSERVING one tree in the orchard wild by nature, which, though it had the same husbandry as the rest, was dressed and pruned by the same hand, and digged and manured as the others were ; though it grew in as rich a soil, and was refreshed with the same sun, and watered with the same showers, yet still it brought forth sour and unpleasant fruit ; and neither art nor labour could alter it, till I caused it to be grafted, and so changed the nature of it, and then the same means used made it answer our expectation. This made me consider that this was the very reason why there was so much difference between persons that live under the same means of grace, under the same ministry, enjoying the same ordinances, yet some bear good fruits, some bad. Surely the fault is not in the means, but in the men. I have read of Melancthon, that when he came to preach the gospel, he preached with such convincing arguments, and so much Scripture light, that he was persuaded that he could have convinced any man ; but after long trial he found the contrary, and was fain to confess that old Adam was too strong for young Melancthon. I have often wondered how drunkards, swearers, adulterers, or other debauched sinners, could sit

unconcerned under powerful discourses, when both the chapter and verse of the Bible have been quoted where they are excluded heaven ; but when I considered that Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but it is God that gives the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 6, my wonder ceased. Man can but speak to the ear, but God speaks to the heart. The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. When the sun shines, and the rain falls upon a fruitful pasture, it makes it more fruitful ; but when upon the heath in the desert, it is little the better. The reason why one hearer bears good fruit and another bad, under the same ministry, is, the one is engrafted into Christ, the other is not, but grows upon the stock of nature. All the watering and manuring in the world will not make a thorn bring forth grapes, or a thistle figs. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit, so that the tree is known by his fruit, Matt. vii. 19, 20. " I am the vine," saith Christ, " ye are the branches : He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me ye can do nothing," Johh xv. 5. When a man abides in the stock of nature, he can bring forth no savoury fruit to God. If the fountain be polluted, the streams cannot be clear. If the heart be bad, the life cannot be good. Of such God saith, " Their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah : their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter," Deut. xxxii. 32. The vine is the evil nature, and the grapes are the wicked works. But when they are engrafted in the true Vine, they

have sap and nourishment from the root; then the buds of good desires and the blossoms of good resolutions spring forth, and after that the fruit of good works. Other professors are but like the ivy which adheres to, and has some shelter and support from the oak, but which still stands upon its own root, and bears its own fruit. Unregenerate men live to themselves; trade for themselves, attribute all to themselves, and have no higher end than themselves, but a gracious soul, as it receives sap and vigour from Christ, so it bears fruit to Christ; and as it receives all from Christ, so it will employ all for him, when others "sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous," Hab. i. 16. A Christian cries out with the church, "Not unto us, Lord; not unto us: but to thy name be the praise."

O my soul, what fruit dost thou bear? is it good or bad, sweet or sour, sound or rotten? Hast thou thy nourishment from Christ, or from the stock of nature? "By their fruits," saith Christ, "ye shall know them," Matt. vii. 20. And thus mayest thou know thyself, whether thou be in the true, or the wild vine. Are thy grapes sweet or sour? or art not thou barren after all this manuring? If thou be barren, expect the sentence, Cut him down; why cumbers he the ground? Luke xiii. 7. Trees that are not for fruit are for fire; and, if thy fruit be not good, thou mayest expect the like doom, Matt. iii. 10. See what God proposed to do with his vineyard, which he had hedged in and manured, when it

brought forth wild grapes, Isa. v. 1—6, he resolved to make it a desolation. If thou bring not forth good fruit to maturity, it will not be long before he will lay down his basket, and take up his axe : thou wilt be condemned as well for not using, as abusing thy talent.

O my God, am I implante^d into Christ or not ? I may well fear I am yet upon the stock of nature ; I bear so little fruit and so bad. Lord, in-graft me into Christ, if I be not ; if I be, Lord, purge me that I may bring forth more fruit.

Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? not one, Job xiv. 4.

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil, Jer. xiii. 23..

I am the Vine, ye are the branches.—Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit ; so shall ye be my disciples, John xv. 5, 8.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance : against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit, Gal. v. 22—25.

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God, Phil. i. 11.

XXXIX.—UPON THE PRUNING OF A TREE.

WHEN I observed some suckers in a fruit-bearing tree, which were not only fruitless themselves, but robbed the tree of her nourishment, and rendered it the less fruitful, (for what should have fed the rest of the branches fed those luxuriant boughs,) I caused these boughs to be taken away, that the sap might return to its old course, and found afterwards, when the tree was cleansed and pruned from these and other unprofitable boughs and branches, it flourished better, and brought forth more and larger fruit. This put me in mind that the great Husbandman deals thus by his trees. “I am the true Vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit:” John xv. 1, 2. Some aspiring branches he takes away: “The gum of pride and the moss of formality,” saith one, “he removes;” but dresses, supports, shelters, and secures the branches that bear fruit. Hypocrites are here said to be in Christ by profession, or in the judgment of charity, when they rather adhere to him than inhere in him; for those who are really in him shall never be cut off: of all those that his Father hath given him, he will not lose one. “My Father,” saith he, “which gave them me,

is greater than all ; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand," John vi. 39 ; x. 29. But there are some, as I said before, that only adhere to Christ as the ivy to the oak, only as a paralyzed arm adheres to the body, but receives neither life, nor heat nor influence from the head or heart. But as in fruit trees there is need of cleansing from moss, cankers, and other hinderances and incumbrances ; so the best Christians, as well as the best society, have need of chastening, that they may bring forth more fruit. There are in the best many deformities that may be taken away without damage, and the causes removed. Christ's vines must be trimmed, dressed, cleansed, and supported. Nothing requires more supporting, more cutting than a vine, that the sap nourish not superfluous branches and leaves ; and it is better to be cut than wither. We see by this the benefit of affliction, and that there is no cause to complain of God, if he take away the cause of some excrescence ; all his pruning, dressing, cutting, is little enough, and sometimes all will not do : see it in his own vineyard. " What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it ? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes," Isa. v. 1—6. And thereupon he threatens to take away the fence, and lay it waste, and break down the wall that it may be trodden down, and lay it waste that it shall neither be pruned nor digged, but may bear briers and thorns, and that he will command the clouds that they shall not rain any more upon it. Now this vineyard is there said to

be the house of Israel, and the men of Judah to be his pleasant plant.

O my soul, art thou a barren branch? then mayest thou fear the pruning hook. If thou be a barren tree, thou mayest fear the axe, and the fire is likely to be thy end. If thou bear but a little fruit; if God spare thee, thou mayest expect cutting and pruning by affliction.

O my God, use me as thou wilt; only cut me not down for the fire. Cut me and prune me at thy pleasure; but forsake me not, nor lay me waste.

Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty, Job v. 17.

Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law; that thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, Psa. xciv. 12, 13.

By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin, Isa. xxvii. 9.

We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world, 1 Cor. xi. 32.

My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him, Heb. xii. 5.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, Rev. iii. 19.

XL.—UPON SUCKERS IN A FRUIT TREE.

FROM the suckers before observed in a fruit tree, I had also the following meditation. Observing how they grew rank by the nourishment that should have fed the tree, and sucked that sap that should have made other branches to bear; and as they were unprofitable themselves, so they rendered the rest almost useless: I thought they much resembled those new opinions which professors sometimes espouse to themselves; and because they differ from others, they therefore think themselves more holy than their neighbours, and hold their heads higher; and verily believe growing in opinion is growing in grace. Now those opinions are oftentimes the offspring of their own fancy; and many times pernicious errors, or at least unprofitable things, or matters of no great importance: yet are these opinions suffered to suck all the sap that should maintain the vitals of religion, so that the whole tree is thereby rendered useless and unprofitable. How many are there in our age that might have brought God much glory, and his church much good who have spent their time and their strength, and laid out their zeal simply for the promoting their own opinion, perhaps an error, or at best but some lesser disputable truth; perhaps about some circumstance of worship, when in the

meantime the very fundamentals of religion are neglected, and the very vitals languish for want of nourishment; for seldom do you see a contentious Christian eminent in the power of godliness. Many men, when they have adopted an opinion, subject it not to the rule, but bring the rule to it; yea, shut their eyes against all that makes not for it. They are as zealous for their opinion, as if the whole of religion consisted in it; and as if they could hardly be Christians who were not of their mind, when perhaps for sixteen hundred years they cannot find a man of their judgment; and all this while forgetting that the power of godliness, and a holy life, are the main things in religion; for whatever is in the head, if not in the heart also, is worth nothing. They spend so much of their strength and zeal for externals, that they neglect the internals; they have so much zeal for or against ceremonies, that they neglect the substance.

Yet mistake me not, my design is not to make men careless in lesser points, but more careful in greater. I would not have them think any sin small, or neglect any known duty, but I would have them proportion their zeal according to the weight of the matter, and not spend it all upon lesser matters, and neglect the main. I would have no man neglect his little finger, yet would I have him in the first place secure his head and heart. He may be a man if he want his little finger, but not without his head and his heart. He may be a Christian, though he err about the modes and circumstances of worship; but he cannot without holiness and since-

rity. "Let all things," saith the apostle, "be done decently and in order," 1 Cor. xiv. 40: a necessary rule, but so extremely perverted, that I conceive, through men's corruption, it has produced more indecency and disorder than any one Scripture besides, the Papists and others making this the foundation of all their needless ceremonies.

But to return to the point in hand: my desire and design is to persuade men to maintain the vitals of religion, in the first place, and let the strength of their zeal be laid out on them; and for lesser points, if disputable, let every man be satisfied in his own conscience, and grant some allowance to others who differ in their judgments, till they themselves are infallibly sure that they hold no errors. Take Christ's counsel, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again," Matt. vii. 1, 2. Many men are quick-sighted abroad, but blind at home. Read the apostle's counsel, Rom. xiv. 1—3, etc.

O my soul, spend not thy time and strength in trifles, when thou hast other work to do. Let thy greatest zeal be laid out on matters of greatest moment. Maintain the vitals of religion, and these will maintain thee. Do not doat upon the conceptions of thy own fancy, neither censure those that differ from thee in circumstantial. Love Christ wherever thou seest him, though in one of another judgment.

Lord, make me upright in the main, and to employ and improve all my strength for thee.

XLI.—UPON A FAIR BUT FRUITLESS TREE.

WHEN I saw a fair and large-spreading tree, which overtopped and overlooked all the rest, which had a flourishing head, and a promising show, and gave great hopes of fruit to all the beholders; but drawing near, as Christ did, to the leafy fig-tree, Matt. xxi. 19, expecting fruit, I found none; its whole strength was spent in bringing forth leaves, when others which were less promising were richly laden with fruit: so apt are we to mistake, if we judge at a distance. When I had seriously considered it, I thought this tree resembled some high-flown professor that makes a great show in the world, and seems, like Saul, higher by the head than others are, and haply despairs them as not fit for their society; for oftentimes hypocrites do so by their poor brethren called weak Christians. These you may frequently hear commanding their own attainments and their own enjoyments, their gifts and their communion with God; and speaking of their holy raptures, their assurance, and such like; and scarcely acknowledging those as Christians who have not indubitable evidence of their salvation, or who can lie under fears and doubts, complaining of the hardness of their hearts, the load of corruption that lies upon them, their want of communion with God, and fellowship with Jesus Christ, the want of assurance, and such like. But when I have come a little nearer to

them, and more heedfully observed their course of life, I saw that many of these great confidents bear little more than leaves ; and that where there was so much of the tongue, there seemed to be but little of the heart ; and their religious duties, especially in their family, were cold enough, and answered not to their lofty pretensions : often the doubting Christians were more constant and spiritual in their performances ; their lives and conversations were more holy towards God, and more righteous towards men than the others were who bare more leaves, but less fruit. Upon this observation, I thought the two classes fitly resembled the Pharisee and the Publican, Luke xviii. 10—14 : the one brags of his worth, the other is ashamed of his duties ; the one comes with confidence into God's presence, but the other with fear : but Christ tells us that the publican was the better man, and better welcome. All is not gold that glitters. It is the aspiring ear of corn that is most likely to be blasted, while such as hang the head are usually the most fruitful ; it is the humble, self-denying Christian that bears most fruit to God, and is most likely to be useful in his generation. God dwells in the high and holy heavens, " with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble," Isa. lvii. 15. The strongest Christian is most sensible of his own wants and weaknesses, as the wisest philosopher could say, " I know nothing but that I know nothing." I dare not then prefer an over-confident boaster before a humble Christian ; I had rather judge by their life than by their language. There are many

that talk like Christians, but I love to see men walk like Christians. When the actions are so dissonant to the words, I cannot think the heart and tongue agree.

O my soul, rather be good than seem so, rather bear fruit than leaves ; for it is fruit and not leaves, substance and not ~~at~~ shadow, thy Lord expects. He requires good works as well as good words, intentions as well as pretences. “ Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth ; a stranger, and not thine own lips,” Prov. xxvii. 2. Let a man do worthily in Ephratah, and he will be famous in Bethlehem ; he need not be his own trumpeter. Honour follows virtue as the shadow does the substance : those that honour God, God will honour ; but those that despise him, shall be lightly esteemed, 1 Sam. ii. 30. Set the crown upon God’s head, and he will set the garland upon thine. Let thy own works, but not thy own words, praise thee, Prov. xxxi. 31. Do well, and thou needest not, with Jehu, proclaim thy own praises ; if thy conversation give light, doubtless it will not be hid.

O my God, let me stand reproved in thy sight, and it matters not what man says of me. Give me truth in the inward parts, make me sound at the heart. Give me sincerity, and I shall then bear thee fruit.

I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die : for I have not found thy works perfect before God, Rev. iii. 1, 2.

XLII.—UPON AN OLD, YET FRUITFUL TREE.

WHEN I saw an old tree which promised little, yet was richly laden, and had not only more fruit than those which were younger, and made a greater show, but the fruit was better also ; it exceeded not only in quantity but also in quality the other trees :—this observation made me think such a tree resembled much an aged Christian, an old disciple, as we read, Acts xxi. 16. Of such it may be noticed, that they usually bear more and better fruit than younger professors, their judgment being ripened and mellowed by experience, and themselves usually not so censorious and self-willed as the others are, who are apt to condemn all that are not just of their judgment, even though they may exhibit as much of Christ and a gospel conversation as themselves. This consideration brought to my mind what the psalmist says of such ; “ The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree : he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing,” Psa. xcii. 12—14. Those that draw sap from Christ, and are grafted into him, must needs bud and bloom, and bring forth fruit ; these are the trees planted by the rivers of water, which bring forth

their fruit in their season, Psa. i. 3; for as aged men, so especially aged Christians, have their judgment ripened by experience, and mellowed by time; and their zeal is not a hot and furious zeal, without knowledge—a zeal, like that of the apostles James and John, who would have called for fire from heaven to consume the inhospitable Samaritans, as they said Elijah did, Luke ix. 54. Young professors, as I said, are prone to be censorious; apt to condemn those who cannot see with their eyes, or who differ from them, though it be in circumstantial and things of small concern; yea, perhaps, will disparage their graces, as if their own hearts, like Jehu's, were the touchstone of sincerity, and their own judgment the touchstone of truth. But aged Christians have learned Christ better, and studied their own hearts more, and will yield a grain of allowance to others, as knowing they need it themselves; and where they see the vitals of religion preserved, they will reach out the right hand of fellowship, though it be to men of a contrary persuasion, in lesser matters; yea, they will love them better and value them more than they do those of their own persuasion, in whom they cannot see such evident signs of grace. There is honourable mention made of an old disciple, Acts xxi. 16; a grey-headed, experienced Christian; a father, 1 John ii. 13. "Ye are they," said Christ, "which have continued with me:—and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me," Luke xxii. 28, 29. God will especially reward those that are aged servants. "Days should speak," said Elihu,

“ and multitude of years should teach wisdom,” Job xxxii. 7. It was a duty commanded by God, and yet is incumbent upon us, to “ rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man,” Lev. xix. 32 ; but then much more an old Christian. “ The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness,” Proy. xvi. 31.

O my soul, own Christ wherever thou seest him, and make not thy own judgment the test to try all other men’s ; nor, with Jehu, thine own heart the touchstone to try others. Judge the tree by the fruit, not by the leaves ; and professors not by their words, but by their works. Grow in grace as thou growest in years ; so mayst thou be an old disciple.

O my God, make me fruitful, and let my fruit be pleasant to thy taste, and let the last be better than the first.

Zacharias and Elizabeth were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.—And they both were well stricken in years, Luke i. 5—7.

That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, Titus ii. 2, 3.

I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient—being such an one as Paul the aged, Philem. 8, 9.

XLIII.—UPON A LEAFY, YET BARREN TREE.

FINDING a tree that at a distance looked well, but which produced nothing but leaves when I expected better fruit, it reminded me of the fruitless fig tree, mentioned Mark xi. 12—14, which disappointed even Christ himself; for he being “hungry, and seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet:” probably the time of ripe figs was not yet, but in his necessity he would have contented himself with those that were green; and being thus disappointed, he said, “Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever; and presently the fig tree withered away.” Methinks this barren tree resembles many in our times, who have a form of godliness, but deny the power of it, 2 Tim. iii. 5: they have leaves, but no fruit; a shadow, but no substance; they have a name to live, but are dead, Rev. iii. 1; they cry, “The temple of the Lord,” when they regard not the Lord of the temple; they content themselves with a bare name, without the nature of Christians; they draw near to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, but their heart is far from him, Matt. xv. 8; all their holiness is in externals; they regulate their words and actions, but the heart is

not restrained or purified ; the heat of their zeal appears chiefly, if not only, in their words, but the heart is cold enough ; they take up the easy, cheap, and safest part of duty, but the difficult, dangerous, or costly part they meddle not with ; they worship that God in public whom they regard not in the closet ; they do no religious duty without witness ; they are saints abroad and devils at home, and usually more dangerous when they appear like saints than when they show themselves in their true colours, and act the devil's part openly.

But doubtless these are not the men whom God will accept, nor is this the service he requires ; he "is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," yea, "the Father seeketh such to worship him," John iv. 23, 24. He calls for the heart : "My son," saith he, "give me thine heart," Prov. xxiii. 26 ; not thy tongue, or hands, but the heart ; for if he have that, the rest will follow ; and till the heart be renewed and given to the Lord, he will accept of nothing that comes from us. "Be not deceived," says the apostle, "God is not mocked," Gal. vi. 7 ; there are none can steal to heaven in a disguise, or without the ticket of holiness ; this is Christ's sheep-mark, and those, and those alone that have it, shall stand upon his right hand at judgment. When he comes to seek fruit and finds none, he will take up his axe ; he has long spared, and may for awhile spare the tree for the vine-dresser's sake, but his patience will not always last ; he will say, Pray not for this people, for they are ripe for

destruction. When the sins of the Amorites were full, their destruction drew near. The lamp of profession may light a man to death, never to heaven.

O my soul, thou hast made profession of religion a long time; what fruit dost thou bring forth? If thou hast nothing but profession, thou mayest expect that Christ shall say to thee as to the fruitless fig tree, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever," Matt. xxi. 19; or if thy fruit be bad, it will not be long before thou art cut down. Up then and be doing, that thy last days may be thy best days, and thy best wine last.

O my good God, though hypocrisy lodge in me, let it not reign in me: give me truth in the inward parts, keep my heart sound in thy testimonies, and I shall be safe.

A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not, Matt. xxi. 28—30.

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them, Matt. xxv. 3.

Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Rev. iii. 17.

XLIV. UPON A GREAT TREE TOSSED WITH
THE WIND.

WHEN I observed some tall spreading trees stretching forth their branches on every side, but tossed and shaken with the wind and storms, whereas smaller shrubs and lesser trees were more free and secure,—I noticed that it often came to pass, that if these great trees bare any fruit, it was blown down before it came to maturity, and seldom came to good; nay, not only the fruit, but the leaves also were forced off by the violent gusts, and winds, and storms, and sometimes the boughs and branches also; yea, the tree itself was often torn down by the tempest, when those that were less and lower were more secure, and brought their fruit to maturity with less danger and hazard. This observation made me think that these trees fitly resembled great men, who seldom bring fruit to maturity, because they lie more open to temptations, and are more liable to dangers than others are. We may easily believe that the evil one is more watchful against their souls than those of others; because they may do him more mischief. Hence it was, that Elymas the sorcerer sought to turn away Sergius Paulus the deputy from the faith, Acts xiii. 7, 8. If great men have but leaves, they are envied for the leaves' sake, and few of them ever bring forth

fruit to maturity ; yea, the leaves themselves, their very profession, are oftentimes borne down by the storm.

This has given me occasion sometimes to bless God that he has freed me from some of those temptations that others lie under, and given me Agur's petition, "neither poverty nor riches," but food convenient; Prov. xxx. 8, and kept me almost all my days in a suffering condition. I considered, I have the same nature as other men have, and had I but the same temptations, I know not but I might have been as bad. I might, like that young man mentioned Matt. xix. 16—22, have parted with Christ for a trifle : had he possessed but a small estate, who knows but he might have proved a true convert ; he coveted heaven, but was dispeased at the price of it. This occasioned Christ to tell us, how hard a thing it was for a rich man to be saved ; "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," ver. 24. All men would have the crown, but they love not the cross that leads to it ; and he is rich indeed that thinks himself never the greater, or never the better for his wealth. O world, how hast thou deceived those that trust in thee, and how hast thou bought their profession out of their hands for a trifle : poor Spira was betrayed by thee, to the shipwreck of faith and a good conscience ; so were Judas, Demas, Ananias, and Sapphira, and a thousand more who knew not the worth of the soul, nor the vanity of the world : they grasped so greedily after gold that they lost their God,

and loved their sin more than their souls ; but what good will it do them when they want a drop of water to cool their tongues ? Luke xvi. 24.

O my soul, bless God who has freed thee from many temptations which others are overcome by. Covet not overmuch a prosperous condition, lest God give it thee for thy portion ; undervalue not thyself so much as to entertain so poor a ~~scorne~~ as the world is, when the Son of God offers himself to thee. Thou canst not buy this gold too dear, but the world thou mayest, and most of when they purchase it with their souls. Thou canst not overvalue this jewel, it is ten thousand times better than thou canst estimate it.

O my God I've met Christ, and it sufficeth. I need no other portion, I desire no other happiness ; let me have him at any rate.

Seest thou great things for thyself ? seek them not, Jer. xlv. 5.

Mind not high things, Rom. xii. 16.

What things were gain to me those I count loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, Phil. iii. 7, 8.

They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition, 1 Tim. vi. 9.

XLV.—UPON A TREE GREEN ALL THE WINTER.

WHEN I observed how green some trees were all the winter, and how flourishing even in the frost and snow, when others are left bare, and seem dead and withered ; and when I perceived that neither pinching frost nor blustering wind, neither storms nor tempests, neither summer's sun nor scorching heat could make them wither or cast their leaves, or change their green to any other colour, I began to think these trees much resemble a Christian who has the life of grace within him, and is planted into that generous vine, Christ, deriving sap and nourishment from him. Such a Christian is green when other professors, who depend upon their own root, wither and decay. He is one of the trees of righteousness described by the psalmist, which are planted by the rivers of water, and bring forth their fruit in due season, and whose leaf also does not wither, Psa. i. 3. Job was one of these trees of righteousness, green at all times, winter and summer. In his prosperity his leaf flourished ; for God himself gives as ample a testimony of him as ever he did of mortal man ; “ Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil ? ” Job i. 8. And when he was in adversity he still

retains his integrity ; "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go : my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live," Job xxvii. 5, 6. All his affliction could not make him lose one leaf. Joseph, when he was in prosperity, fears God ; and when in adversity, he fears him also ; when he was a bondslave in Potiphar's house, he resisted the temptations of his mistress, with this consideration, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?" Gen. xxxix. 9 ; when he was wrongfully cast into prison, he keeps his integrity still, and afterwards, when he was advanced to honour, and became the second ruler in Egypt, he did not forget his God, nor did God forget him. Not all the hot beams of prosperity, nor all the violent storms of adversity, could shake down any of his fruit, or stir any of his leaves. It is true, wicked men in their prosperity are said to be spreading themselves like a green bay tree ; but this denotes the prosperity of the body, not of the soul ; these leaves at death will drop as well as others, and their prosperity and happiness will draw to an end, and all their enjoyment will be but as a thin mist before the wind. But "mark the perfect man, and behold the upright : for the end of that man is peace," Psa. xxxvii. 37. "I am," says the psalmist, "like a green olive tree in the house of God," Psa. lii. 8, when those that trust not in the Lord shall be destroyed. It was not banishment that could separate David from the stock in which he was planted, nor make his fruit to fall or his leaves to fade ; it was not

affliction could make him lose his integrity, or a kingdom make him forget his God. The apprehension of danger could not shake a leaf from Daniel, or either of his three associates; they maintained their profession before the king and his nobles in the sight of the fiery furnace and the lions' den; neither force nor fraud, fear nor favour, riches nor honour, preferments nor promotions, could make them start aside from their God, by omitting any known duty, or committing any known sin. Where there is no sap in the root, the branches must needs wither; but a true Christian is always the same, whether on the throne with David or on the dunghill with Job, in the dungeon with Jeremiah or in the stocks with Paul and Silas; neither prosperity nor adversity, friend nor foe, man nor devil, can separate him from Christ.

O my soul, get life in the root, and thou wilt hold out in the winter; draw thy sap from Christ, for nothing else will keep thee from withering or preserve thy leaves from falling; feed upon that bread of life, and the water of life, and thou shalt never die; thy garments then will be always white, and thy head want no ointment, Eccl. ix. 8. Neither wind nor weather can hurt thee, if thou be in this vine; but if thou be not, though thou make ever so imposing a show in summer, in winter thou wilt be stripped of all.

O my God, let my heart be sound in thy statutes; let the root of the matter be in me; take me off the stock of nature, and plant me in the vine, Christ; so shall I never wither.

XLVI.—ON THE DECAY OF TREES FROM NEGLECT.

OBSERVING some trees which had formerly been fruitful beginning to decline, I observed and searched out more narrowly what the cause was, and I perceived it was not age that did it, but want of good husbandry; so much had they been neglected, that they required at once pruning, cleansing, manuring, and watering, and were pestered with weeds and other hurtful annoyances, which diverted the nourishment which should have fed and cherished them. When I had observed this, I applied the remedy accordingly. I caused the ground to be rid, and the trees to be pruned, cleansed, digged, and manured; and in process of time, the event answered my expectation, and the trees recovered their pristine beauty and goodness.

The whole circumstances produced the following meditation: I thought an orchard resembled the church of God, for so it is called; “Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates,” Cant. iv. 13. Now, as in an orchard, it is not enough that it be planted, and grafted, and that with the choicest fruit, but continual care is to be had of ordering, manuring, watering, and fencing it; so the church, God’s plantation, will never thrive, if there are not dabourers to cultivate it. There must be some Pauls to plant, and some like

Apollos to water; some ministers to manure, some to prune. And oh, how happy are the people who meet with such labourers, such as have both will and skill to do good ! But God may complain of many as he did of old : I sent them not, yet they run ; I spake not to them, yet they prophesy, Jer. xiv. 14. There are, alas ! too many neither gifted nor qualified for the sacred office ; too many who are loiterers rather than labourers ; too many who regard the wages more than the work, and the fleece more than the flock : they would have the profit without being either at pains or cost ; but the vineyard will never prosper under such men's hands.

In the Bible, many honourable titles are given to ministers, and all of them, it is worth observing, denote diligence and duty, as well as dignity. They are, for example, called *watchmen*, Ezek. iii. 17, but too many are blind, Isa. lvi. 10, or if they see the enemy coming, they give no warning to prepare. They are called *shepherds*, but too many feed themselves and not the flock. They are called *lights*, but too many walk in darkness, or hide their light under a bushel ; or are like an *ignis fatuus*, which leads men out of the way, not in it. They are called "the salt of the earth," Matt. v. 13, yet too many have lost their savour. They are called angels, but too many resemble evil angels in their lives and conversations. They are called builders, but what they build with the one hand, they pluck down with the other ; nay, destroy what others have built. They are called stewards, but live as if they should never give account of their

stewardship. They are called husbandmen, but neither care to plant nor to sow, to water nor to manure. They are called vine-dressers, but take little pains in the vineyard; they have the greatest charge in the world, and many take least care: a description of ministers of this sort you have in Isa. lvi. 10—12. But Paul was not such a shepherd; for three years' space he ceased not, day nor night, but in public, and from house to house, he warned his hearers with tears, Acts xx. 31; and happy are those people that meet with labourers like-minded with him.

O my soul, despise not the ministry, but honour them for their works' sake, especially those that labour in the word and doctrine, 1 Tim. v. 17; for those are worthy of double honour. In thy place and station, mind both the welfare of thy own soul and those about thee; and let not the blood of souls be laid at thy door.

O my God, forgive all my former neglects, and, for the future, though I be unprofitable, let me not be unfaithful.

I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved, 2 Cor. xii. 15.

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, 2 Tim. iv. 2.

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, Heb. xiii. 7, 8.

XLVII.—UPON PROMISING TREES AFTERWARDS
BLASTED.

IN an early spring, when there was great likelihood of much fruit, when the trees were richly beautified with plenty of buds and blossoms, and there was great expectation of a plentiful year of fruit; behold! in a moment, all our hopes were dashed, and the trees were suddenly blasted with lightning, or a storm, and so those that just before were in the height of their pride and glory were now made barren, and the very leaves as well as blossoms scorched! This sudden Divine providence shows to us the power of God in disposing of our outward enjoyments; for as he does for his people's sin and abuse of his mercies threaten to take away his corn in the time thereof, and his wine in the season thereof, and recover his wool and his flax, which he had given to cover their nakedness, Hos. ii. 9; so hath he power to take away other fruits of the field, and to frustrate the hopes of the husbandman; for the power to give and to take away he has reserved in his own hands. Accordingly this providence, dark as it seemed, yielded me some light and taught me this profitable lesson, not to put overmuch confidence in any earthly enjoyment how promising soever, nor to call any thing my own before I have it in my possession, nor depend upon it too much then, for there is uncertainty and vanity written upon all these outward things: they are like Jonah's gourd which grew up in a night, and perished in a night; and have a worm bred in them that many times

eats out their very hearts. When God blows upon any earthly enjoyment, it often vanishes away and comes to nothing; "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.—Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it," Hag. i. 6, 9.

Oh how much would it conduce to our happiness, to set a light esteem upon these so transitory, so fading enjoyments, and to resign up our wills to God's will in all things; then should we never be frustrated in our expectations or disappointed in our hopes, and what is best for us would surely come to pass: but when we expect great matters, and they fall short of our expectation, then we are apt to be cast down, and our hearts despond; but if we expect little, we shall not be much troubled if it prove but little. "Wilt thou set thine eyes," saith Solomon, "upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings and fly away," Prov. xxiii. 5. The same day, for aught we know, found Job the richest man in all the east, and left him poor even to a proverb. "I have seen," says the psalmist, "the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found," Psa. xxxvii. 35, 36.

How oft may we see, in our times, great families rooted out! God blows upon them, and

they wither, their great estates dwindle into nothing, and that by an insensible hand of God, when no man can give an account or reason of it. Many who appeared likely to thrive and grow rich in the world, we have seen suddenly come to nothing. Many again there are who have had promising parts, great natural gifts and endowments, and to whom God had lent many talents ; but they not improving them, God has called them in and given them to those who would better employ them. It is no uncommon thing to observe a wane and decay of God's gifts in those that use them not ; their abilities fail apace when once they begin to fail, till at last God lays them aside as broken vessels, and causes them to be forgotten, "as a dead man out of mind," Psa. xxxi. 12 ; till finally, as unprofitable and unfaithful servants, they are cast into outer darkness, Matt. viii. 12. Many, in our times also, there are who have had seeming grace, and like the glow-worm made a great show in a dark night ; yet has their light been ultimately extinguished, and their lamps gone out for lack of oil.

O my soul, promise not thyself great things in the world, neither content thyself with small things for eternity ; be as earnest for grace as others are for gold, and make as sure for heaven as others do for the world. If thou wilt plant, let it be in a better soil, then mayest thou expect a better increase ; neither wind nor sun, frost nor snow, thunder nor lightning, can blast or nip the flowers of paradise.

Lord, take off my affections from the world, and set them upon Christ ; then shall I never be disappointed of my hopes.

XLVIII.—UPON FRUIT LEFT ON THE TREES AFTER
SHAKING.

IN the autumn, when the fruit became ripe and was gathered in, yet I beheld here and there an apple, plum, or other fruit still remaining on the trees, which adhered to its stem, notwithstanding all the force and violence that had been used in shaking; but these were only a few, and those commonly the soundest and most durable. This brought to my mind the command of God in the time of the law, Lev. xix. 9, 10; xxiii. 22; Deut. xxiv. 19, where God commands the Jews, when they reaped their fields, to leave some of the corners thereof standing, and not to gather up the gleanings, but to leave them for the poor, and when they shook their olives and other fruit trees, to leave some clusters remaining, and not to gather all the fruit; that so it might be for the poor and needy of the land, and for the stranger for meat. We see how the great Husbandman and chief Proprietor of wealth acts in his distribution of it; how he takes care of the poor that they should be fed; and has appointed where they shall have their meat, and commanded his stewards to give it them in due season: he would have the full cups of the rich to overflow into their empty dishes: those that feed the poor entertain Christ himself at their table as a guest.

I observed also how little this command of God was observed by many in our days; how little they respect his will, and make good this condition, in the grant they have of all they enjoy: though we receive all from God, and that with this proviso, that the poor shall have their part and their share out of it, yet often he that gives all and requires but a little, cannot have it; yea, though he would borrow a little of his own, he is oftentimes denied it; though he promises to repay it, yea, to repay it an hundred-fold, yet he cannot be heard. He has said, "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse," Prov. xxviii. 27; curses both from God and man: yet few believe that giving to the poor is the way to get wealth. God shows them many an altar, but they have no sacrifice ready; but he that "stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself, but shall not be heard," Prov. xxi. 13. It is not getting but giving is the true way to wealth. Chrysostom says, "Alms is the most gainful art." "He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy," James ii. 13; but "he that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again," Prov. xix. 17. Benefactions to the indigent God accepts as a gift to himself, nay, as a loan, and gives security for it, so to speak, under his hand; but those that now will not take God's word, hereafter God will not take theirs. He will require an account of their stewardship, and give away their talents to those who will better improve

them, and assign them a reward with the unprofitable servant, Matt. xxv. 28, 30; then when too late, their eyes will be opened to see their folly.

The consideration also of this little quantity of fruit left upon the trees after the shaking, made me think it presented an image of the godly, who stand fast, and remain firm after all the shakings that they meet with; when others, frost-bitten by affliction, or tossed by persecution, fall as leaves before the wind in autumn. Many are the professors in a sun-shiny day, but few can abide in a storm. "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved," Rom. ix. 27. "All are not Israel, which are of Israel, ver. 6. These are compared to the gleaning of the grapes after the vintage; here and there one, few in comparison: or to the shaking of the olive tree, where two or three berries are left in the top of the utmost boughs, and four or five in the outmost branch, one of a tribe, and two of a family, Isa. xvii. 6. Many shakings the church has already had, and much unripe fruit is fallen; and when stronger winds arise, we may imagine much more will fall; but in the last shaking, when Christ shall come "like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap," Mal. iii. 2, all that is unsound at heart will be discovered; then the sinners in Zion shall be afraid, fearfulness shall surprise the hearts of the hypocrites, Isa. xxxiii. 14.

O my soul, take heed of being blown down; nay, take heed of being unsound, for then, fall assuredly thou wilt. It is better to be alone than

in such company; and better go to heaven alone than to hell with company; to stand against the storm than to be blown down with the wind. Improve thy talents to God's glory, and he will never let thee fall.

O my God, let no sun of persecution wither me, nor any boisterous storm bear me down.

Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble, Psa. xli. 1.

He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he, Prov. xiv. 21.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he be rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich, 2 Cor. viii. 9.

For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth, Amos ix. 9.

Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is, 1 Cor. iii. 11—13.

XLIX.—UPON THE MANY ENEMIES WHICH FRUIT TREES HAVE.

WHEN I considered how many enemies fruit trees meet with, and the incumbrances which ofttimes injure and spoil their fruit, I wondered that any brought forth fruit to maturity. For sometimes they are planted in a dry soil, and then no wonder if they prosper not; sometimes in a too moist one, and then are they poisoned and rendered barren; sometimes in one too rich, and then they grow too luxuriantly; often they are barren for want of sufficient sap; sometimes for want of good husbandry, they are troubled with suckers, which draw the sap to themselves and rob the tree, and the whole tree by this means is rendered unfruitful; sometimes they are cumbered with moss and other obstructions, to their no little damage; sometimes they are molested by worms, ants, and such like insects; sometimes the winter proves unseasonable, and the spring unfavourable, so that they never bloom; and sometimes, when they have blossomed, and give good ground of hopes, yet in a moment all our hopes are dashed, and they are suddenly nipped with the frost, or blasted with lightning, or the east winds; sometimes they are rendered unfruitful by overmuch drought, and sometimes by too much wet, for both may be

injurious to the tree and to the fruit. If they escape these dangers, and are laden with fruit, much of it is often consumed by wasps, hornets, and other insects; yea, sometimes not only the fruit, but also the leaves are eaten by locusts, caterpillars, and other worms; sometimes, for want of fence, they are undermined, and spoiled by swine or cattle breaking in; and oftentimes the unripe fruit is borne down by a mighty rushing wind; as it is said, "And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind," Rev. vi. 13. And even, if they escape all these accidents, many prove barren, and many bring forth fruit which is sour, bitter, or unsavoury, and very little fruit that is really good is gathered.

The consideration of this made me compare the children of men to these trees of the field, and to inquire what is the reason so few bring forth fruit to maturity. Many are planted in the dry desert heath, where they see not when good comes; they never hear of our blessed Saviour, or are privileged to listen to one gospel sermon, and these are not likely to bring forth good fruit. Many of those who live within the pale of the church are not much better: it is true, the seed is sown amongst them, but much of it falls by the wayside, and the fowls of the air pick it up, Matt. xiii. 4. The devil steals it out of their hearts; some of it falls among stones, where it has no root, so that though received with joy, and though it springs up suddenly, yet wanting root, it must needs wither; some falls among

thorns, and is choked; these, saith Christ, are the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, ver. 22; and but a little falls into good ground, and that undergoes a thousand dangers ere it comes to maturity: sometimes it is parched with the sun of prosperity, and sometimes nipped with the frost of adversity. the devil's temptations, and the world's allurements, often spoil the fruit; sometimes it withers for want of the dew of heaven to refresh it; sometimes it is overwhelmed with the floods of affliction. A thousand, and ten thousand are the dangers this seed of grace undergoes before it comes to maturity.

O my soul, hast thou many enemies? Christ himself had not a few. Live uprightly toward man, holily towards God. Bring forth much fruit to God, and doubtless he will wall thee in and defend thee.

O my God, mine enemies are many and subtle, powerful and malicious; be thou my defender, and let my fruit be pleasant to thy taste, and sweet to thy smell.

We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God, Acts xiv. 22.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand, Eph. vi. 12, 13.

L.—THE WORLD IS NOT A RESTING PLACE.

WHEN I had become tired with studies and other employments, and found myself recreated in my garden among the various delights which there offered themselves to my senses, and unbent the bow that was beginning to grow weak ; after passing my time for a season in this society, at last night approached, and my pleasures began to vanish. The birds which before delighted my ears with their melodious harmony were now gone to rest, and those herbs and flowers which before delighted my senses had now disappeared ; their various colours, forms, and shapes, could no longer be distinguished, but were all dyed in one sable colour, and I was left alone. The cold air began to pierce me, and only bats and owls, those birds of the night, were my companions. This made me to consider how unpleasant this place of delights, the greatest recreation I had in the world for my body, would be to me at this time, had I no other habitation, and how unwelcome a night in it would be to me. Here I was exposed to wind and weather, liable to be wet with the dew of heaven, and to have, with Jacob, a stone for my pillow. I considered now, though I too often forgot it, the great goodness of God to the just and to the unjust, to cause his sun to shine upon

them; one sun makes a day, but the moon and all the stars make but a night; and what a mercy is it then, when the Sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings! Mal. iv. 2. This raised my meditation a little higher, and I thought with myself, If this garden, this place of delights, be no comfortable *abiding place* for the body; surely then the world is no resting place for the soul. Here in the day-time of life man may take some delight, but "the night cometh, when no man can work," John ix. 4; and when all these things shall vanish, I must seek out for some better shelter, some better lodging, some better resting place for my soul. When death comes, and the sun of life is set upon me, all present delightful objects will be gone, they will forsake me, and hide their heads, and yield no delight, comfort, or refreshment; crowns and kingdoms, dirt and diamonds, will then be valued alike; these outward things can afford neither food nor medicine, neither lodging nor entertainment, neither pleasures nor profit, to the weary soul; these earthly tabernacles ere long will be dissolved, and these houses of clay, will moulder into dust, 2 Cor. v. 1; and what shall we then do, if we are no better provided? The soul here wears the body as a garment, which when it is worn out, the saints shall have a better suit, they shall be clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ; and assurance of God's love may well make such willing to die. But oh, the blindness, madness, and stupidity of man, whose care is to load himself with thick clay, and to take care what he shall eat, or what he shall drink, or

wherewithal he shall be clothed, (Hab. ii. 6; Matt. vi. 31,) and makes no provision for the soul, but depends upon that for comfort which can do no good when good is needed. He can provide in the day for the night, in the summer for the winter, on the market-day for the whole week, and at a fair for the whole year, and yet make no provision in life for death, or in time for eternity.

O my soul, how fares it with thee, or what preparation hast thou made? Long it cannot be before night comes, where then will be thy lodging? The earth then will be to thee as the waters to Noah's dove, thou wilt find no rest here for the sole of thy foot; it is in heaven only that the weary are at rest, Job iii. 17.

O my God, enable me to clear up my interest in Christ, who is the only sanctuary for a troubled soul.

Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, Micah ii. 10.

Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come, Heb. xiii. 14.

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself, Phil. iii. 20, 21.

